

Poverty

Chapter 5: Poverty

POVERTY

The U.S. Census Bureau collects data on poverty levels for “*Families*” and “*Unrelated Individuals*”. A family is defined as a “householder and one or more other people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption”.

Unrelated individuals are defined as “all people except institutionalized people, people in military group quarters, people in college dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years old”.

Poverty is based on a combination of factors related to family size and income. For a detailed

discussion of the poverty definition see Appendix.

Between 1990 and 2000, several significant poverty patterns remained unchanged for families and individuals in the City of Houston.

- **The highest concentrations of poverty remain in the eastern half of the City.** Almost all of the Super Neighborhoods in the eastern half of the City (east of US 59 and SH 288) have ‘moderate-poverty’ levels (where 20% to 40% of the population is in poverty). The majority of ‘high-poverty’ Super Neighborhoods (where more than 40% of the population is in poverty) are east of Downtown.
- **The largest numbers of persons with incomes below poverty level were in Super Neighborhoods in the southwest outside Loop 610, and north of downtown.** In 2000, three Super Neighborhoods in the southwest outside Loop 610, (Sharpstown, Alief and Gulfton) had the largest number of persons below poverty, together accounting for 49,149 persons. In 1990, Northside/Northline, Gulfton and Greater Fifth Ward had the largest number of persons below poverty, together accounting for 36,405 persons.

‘Poverty By Age’ includes data about poverty levels of unrelated individuals by different age groups such as (a) less than 5 years, (b) 5 to 17 years, (c) 18 to 64 years, and (d) 65+ years.

Using “*Ratio of Income to Poverty*” for unrelated individuals, the Census identifies the number of persons living in poverty. Income-to-poverty ratio is the ratio of individual income to their appropriate poverty threshold. Ratios below 1.00 indicate that the income for given individuals is below the official definition of poverty, while a ratio of 1.00 or greater indicates income above the poverty level. A ratio of 1.25, for example, indicates that income was 25% above the appropriate poverty threshold.

‘Poverty Status of Families’ provides data about poverty levels of families by family type, which may be (a) married couple family, (b) female-headed family, (c) male-headed family; each of which may or may not have related children less than 18 years of age.

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- **The largest number of families below poverty level was in the category of female-headed families with children.** In 2000, female-headed families accounted for 44% of all families in the City below poverty level, compared to 46% in 1990. In both years, almost 9 of 10 of these families had children below 18 years old (See table).
- **Almost half of the population below poverty level has incomes that are less than 50% of the poverty threshold.**
- **Poverty levels were the highest among children below 5 years of age.** In 2000, 28% of the children less than 5 years were in poverty, compared to 30% in 1990.

Between 1990 and 2000, several changes occurred in the City's population living in poverty:

- **The number of persons and families below poverty level increased.** Although most Super Neighborhoods inside Loop 610 experienced a decrease in population below poverty level, those on the edges of the City experienced increases, especially in the southwest. The highest decreases were north of Downtown, while the highest increases were in the southwest outside Loop 610, in Sharpstown, Gulfton and Alief.

The number of persons below poverty level increased among all age groups

(Under 5 years, 6 to 17 years, 18 to 64 years), except among seniors (65+ years), where it decreased slightly. The largest increase was in persons 18 to 64 years (See table).

The number of families below poverty level increased among all types of families (married-couple families, female-headed families, and male-headed families). Largest increase was in the number of female-headed families with children.

- **Distribution of persons below poverty level in the City's Super Neighborhoods experienced decentralization.** Most Super Neighborhoods inside Loop 610 experienced decreases, while Super Neighborhoods outside Loop 610 and on the edges of the city gained persons below poverty level.
- **Concentrations of poverty reduced in the City.** In 2000, there were 4 'high-poverty' Super Neighborhoods (where more than 40% of the population is in poverty) compared to 6 Super Neighborhoods in 1990.

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POVERTY LEVEL OF FAMILIES

A family, as defined by the Census, may be a married couple family, a female-headed family, or a male-headed family; each of which may or may not have related children less than 18 years living with them. This section discusses poverty levels by Super Neighborhoods among these three types of families. Analysis includes:

- (1) Super Neighborhoods with high *numbers* of families living under poverty level. For example, in 2000, Sharpstown had 3,746 families (5% of citywide total) below poverty level, the highest in the City, and Medical Center Area had 31 such families, the lowest in the City.
- (2) Super Neighborhoods with high *concentrations* of poverty where a significant *proportion* of the total number of families are living under poverty level. For example, in Greater Third Ward, in 2000, 44% of the families were below poverty level, the highest in the City, compared to 1% in University Place Super Neighborhood, the lowest in the City.

In 2000, patterns of poverty for Houston families remain unchanged since 1990: 1) About 16% of all families in the City of Houston are below poverty level. 2) The largest numbers of families below poverty level are in Super Neighborhoods in the southwest outside Loop 610, and north of Downtown. 3) Highest concentrations of poverty are in the eastern half of the City, where at least 1 of 5 families live below poverty level in most Super Neighborhoods. 4) Of all types of families, the

largest numbers below poverty level are female-headed families with children below 18 years (See table).

Between 1990 and 2000, citywide, the number of all families below poverty level increased by approximately 6,000. Overall, Super Neighborhoods on the edges of the City experienced increases in the number of families below poverty level, and most Super Neighborhoods inside Loop 610 experienced decreases. The largest increases occurred in Super Neighborhoods in the southwest, while the largest decreases occurred in Super Neighborhoods immediately north of Downtown. Of all family types, the largest increase occurred among married couple families with children under 18 years.

Although there was an increase in the number of families below poverty level, concentrations of poverty decreased in several Super Neighborhoods. In 2000, there were only 3 Super Neighborhoods where one third or more of all families were below the poverty level, compared to 16 Super Neighborhoods in 1990.

Married Couple Families

In 2000, married-couple families accounted for 47% of all families below poverty level, compared to 45% in 1990. In both years, about three quarters of the married-couple families below poverty level had children less than 18 years living with them.

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Between 1990 and 2000, there was an increase of about 3,717 married-couple families below poverty level, most of whom had children below 18 years of age. About half of the Super Neighborhoods in the City experienced increases, while the remainder experienced decreases. The largest increase was in the southwest, with Sharpstown, Alief and Gulfton together gaining about 2,300 such families. The largest decrease was in Magnolia Park that lost about 550 such families.

The largest numbers of married-couple families below poverty were in Super Neighborhoods in the southwest outside Loop 610, and north of Downtown. In 2000, Sharpstown and Gulfton each had over 1,900 such families, while in 1990, Gulfton and Northside/Northline each had over 1,300 such families.

Male Householder, no wife present

In 1990 and 2000, male-headed families were the smallest proportion of all families below poverty level. In 2000, they accounted for 10% of all families below poverty level, compared to 9% in 1990. About 7 of 10 of these families had children below 18 years (See table).

Between 1990 and 2000, there was an increase of 1,364 male-headed families below poverty level. About one third of the City's Super Neighborhoods experienced increases, while the remainder experienced decreases. Gulfton and Sharpstown gained about 130 such families each; Magnolia Park and South Park each lost over 50 such families.

The largest numbers of male-headed families below poverty level are in Super Neighborhoods in the southwest outside Loop 610, and north of Downtown. In 2000, Sharpstown and Gulfton each had over 330 such families; in 1990, Sharpstown and Alief had over 230 such families.

Female Householder, no husband present

In 2000, female-headed families accounted for 44% of all families below poverty level, compared to 46% in 1990. In both years, almost 9 of 10 of these families had children below 18 years old (See table).

The largest numbers of female-headed families below poverty level are in Super Neighborhoods outside Loop 610 along the northern and southern edges of the City. In 2000, Alief, Sharpstown and Greater Inwood each had more than 1,100 such families, while in 1990, Greater Fifth Ward, Acres Homes and Northside/Northline each had over 1,200 such families (See map).

Between 1990 and 2000, there was an increase of about 907 female-headed families below poverty level. About half of the Super Neighborhoods in the City experienced increases in such families, especially in the southwest along the edges of the City, while the remainder experienced decreases, especially in the northern portions of the City. Alief and Greater Inwood each gained over 500 such families, while Greater Fifth Ward lost about 500 such families.

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Table 5.1
Poverty Level of Families

	Families		% of total	
	2000	1990	2000	1990
Families Below Poverty Level	73,800	67,811	16.0%	16.4%
Families Above Poverty Level	388,137	344,493	84.0%	83.6%
Total	461,937	412,304	100.0%	100.0%

Change in Number of Families Below Poverty Level

	Families		#	%
	2000	1990	change	change
Families Below Poverty Level	73,800	67,811	5,989	8.8%
Families Above Poverty Level	388,137	344,493	43,644	12.7%
Total	461,937	412,304	49,633	12.0%

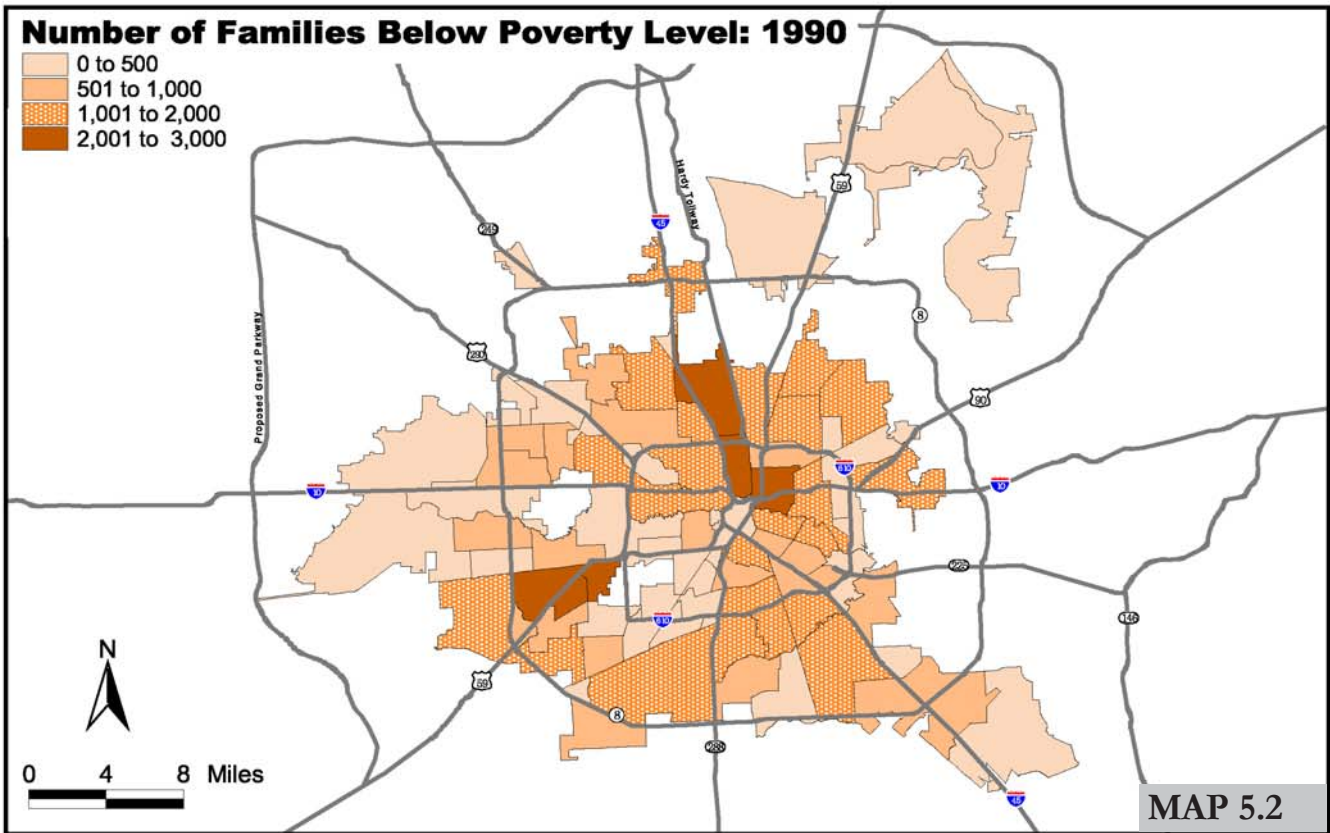
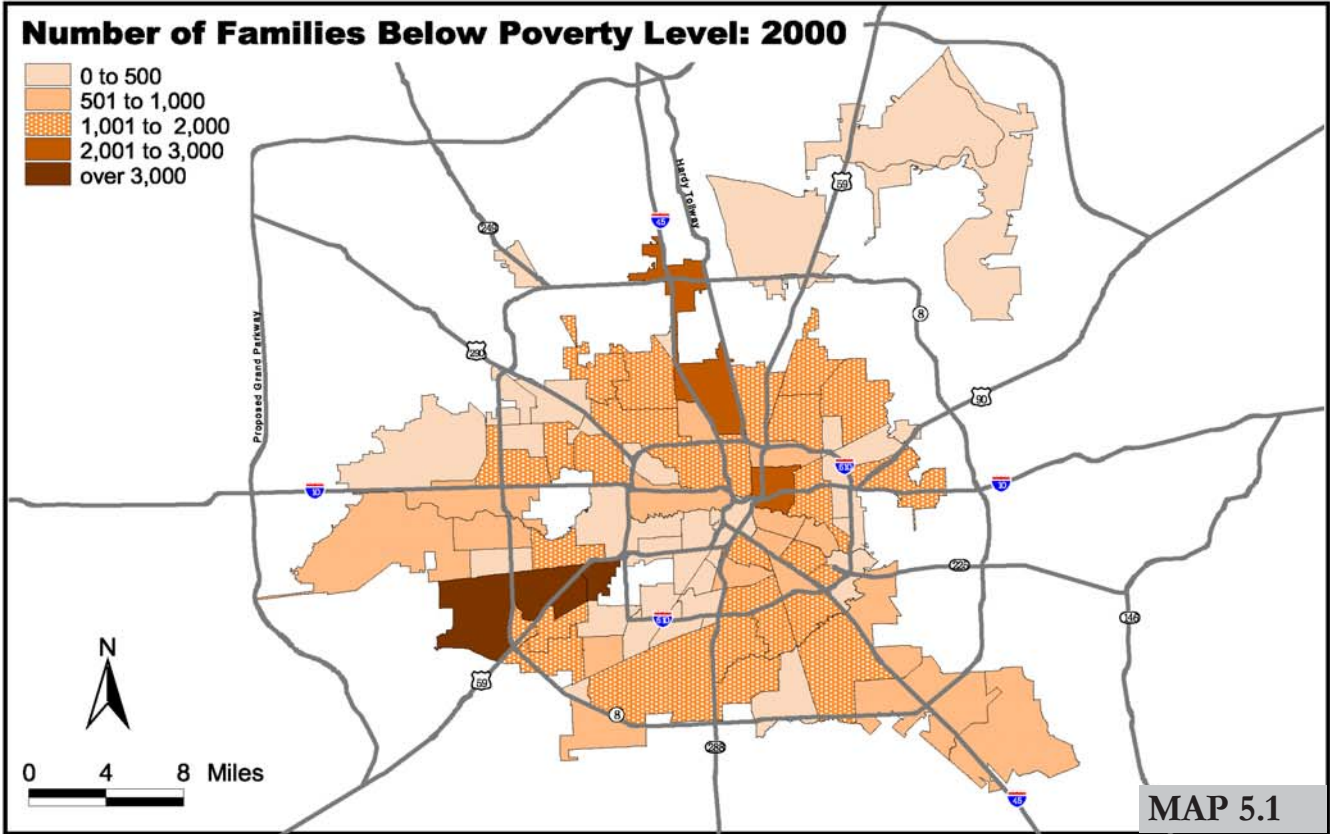
Table 5.2
Families Below Poverty Level by Family Type

	Families		% of total	
	2000	1990	2000	1990
Married Couple Families				
With Children under 18 years	26,331	22,963	35.7%	33.9%
Without Children under 18 years	7,978	7,629	10.8%	11.3%
Male Householder, no wife present				
With Children under 18 years	4,885	3,881	6.6%	5.7%
Without Children under 18 years	2,103	1,743	2.8%	2.6%
Female Householder, no husband present				
With Children under 18 years	28,282	27,335	38.3%	40.3%
Without Children under 18 years	4,221	4,260	5.7%	6.3%
Total	73,800	67,811	100.0%	100.0%

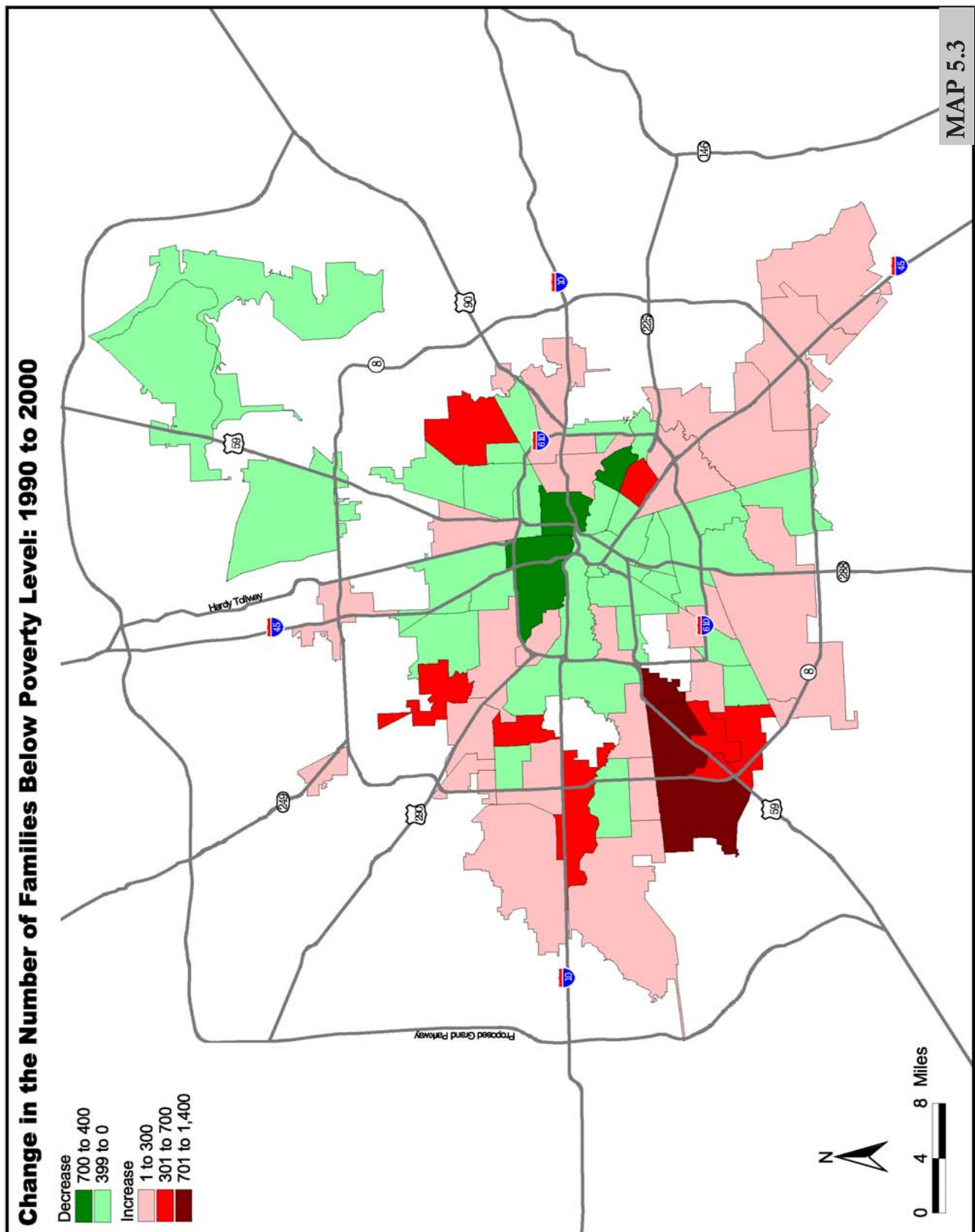
Change in Number of Families Below Poverty Level by Family Type

	Families		#	%
	2000	1990	change	change
Married Couple Families				
With Children under 18 years	26,331	22,963	3,368	14.7%
Without Children under 18 years	7,978	7,629	349	4.6%
Male Householder, no wife present				
With Children under 18 years	4,885	3,881	1,004	25.9%
Without Children under 18 years	2,103	1,743	360	20.7%
Female Householder, no husband present				
With Children under 18 years	28,282	27,335	947	3.5%
Without Children under 18 years	4,221	4,260	(39)	-0.9%
Total	73,800	67,811	5,989	8.8%

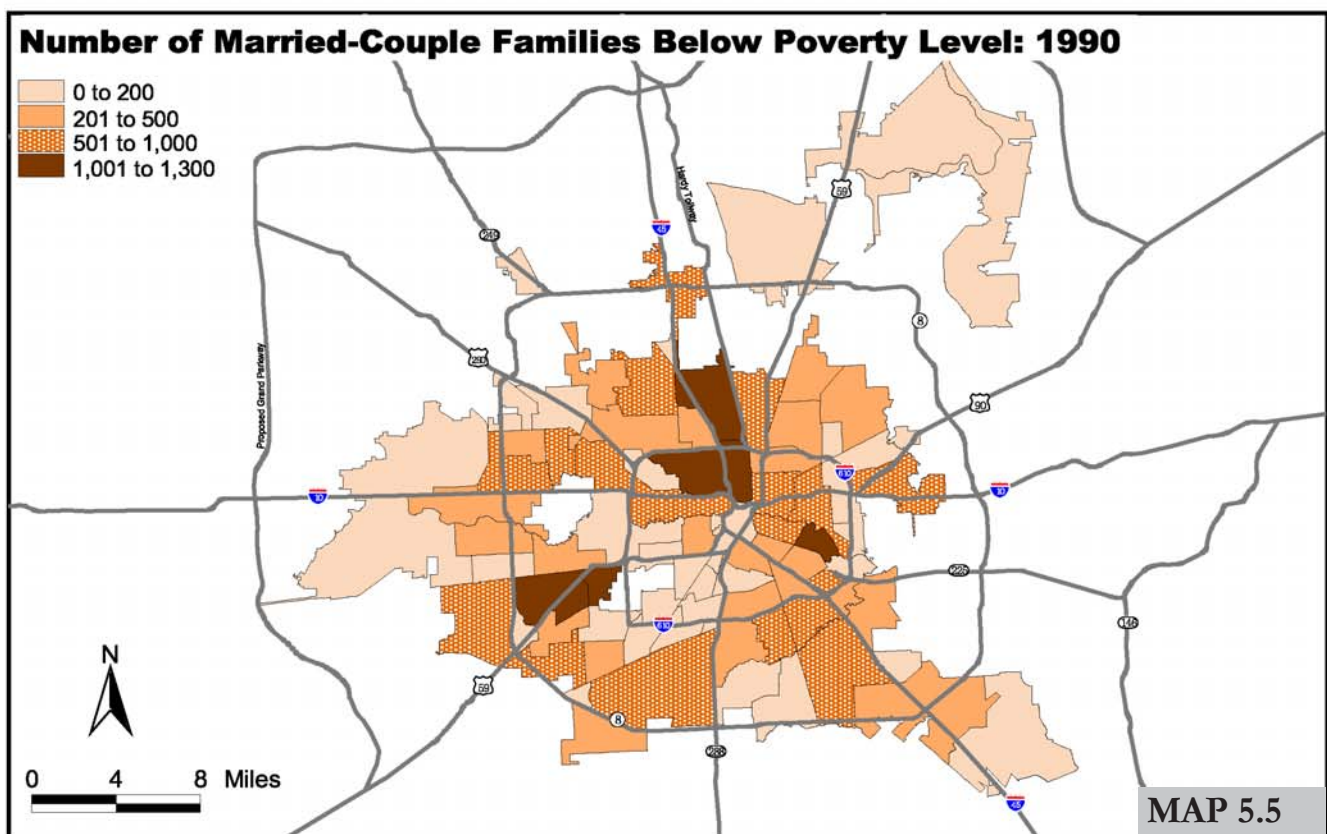
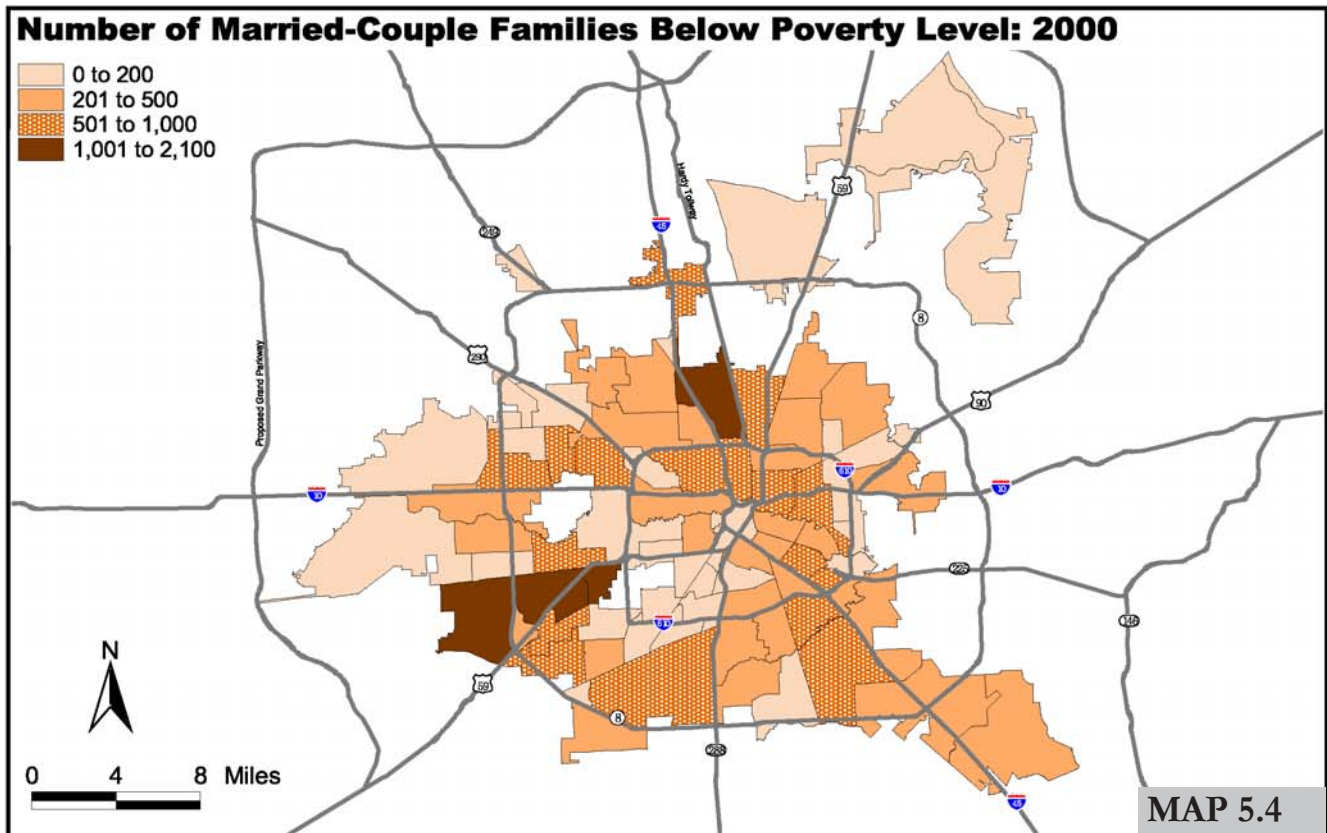
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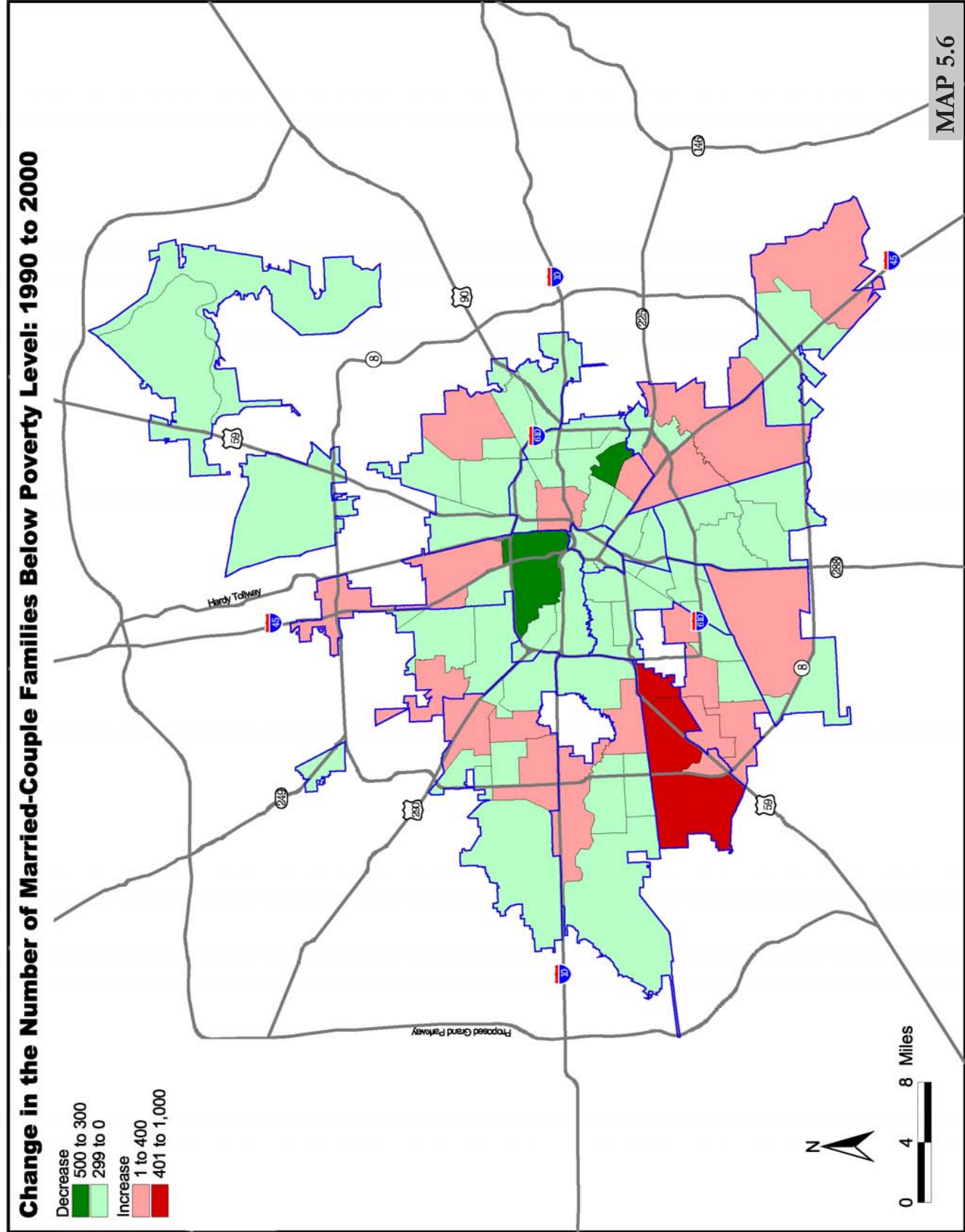
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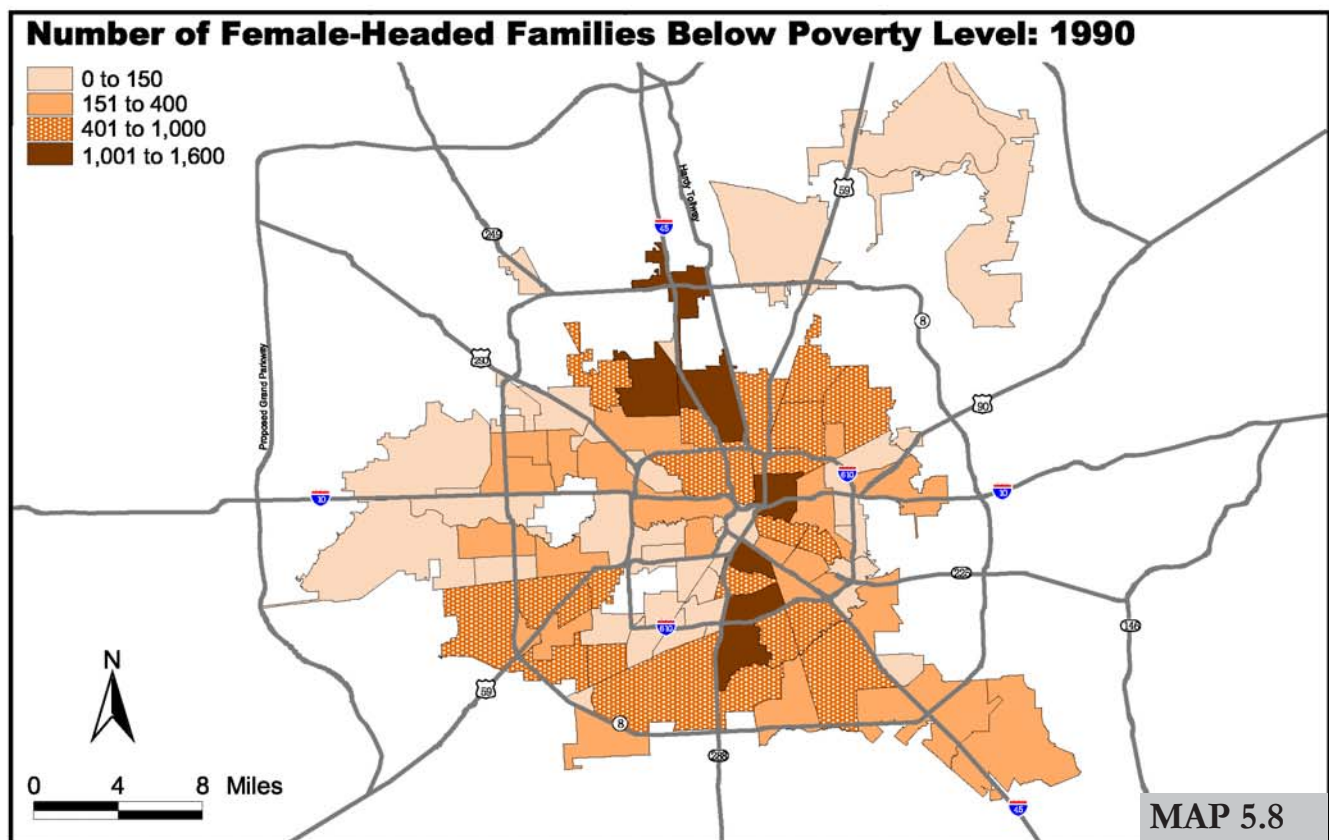
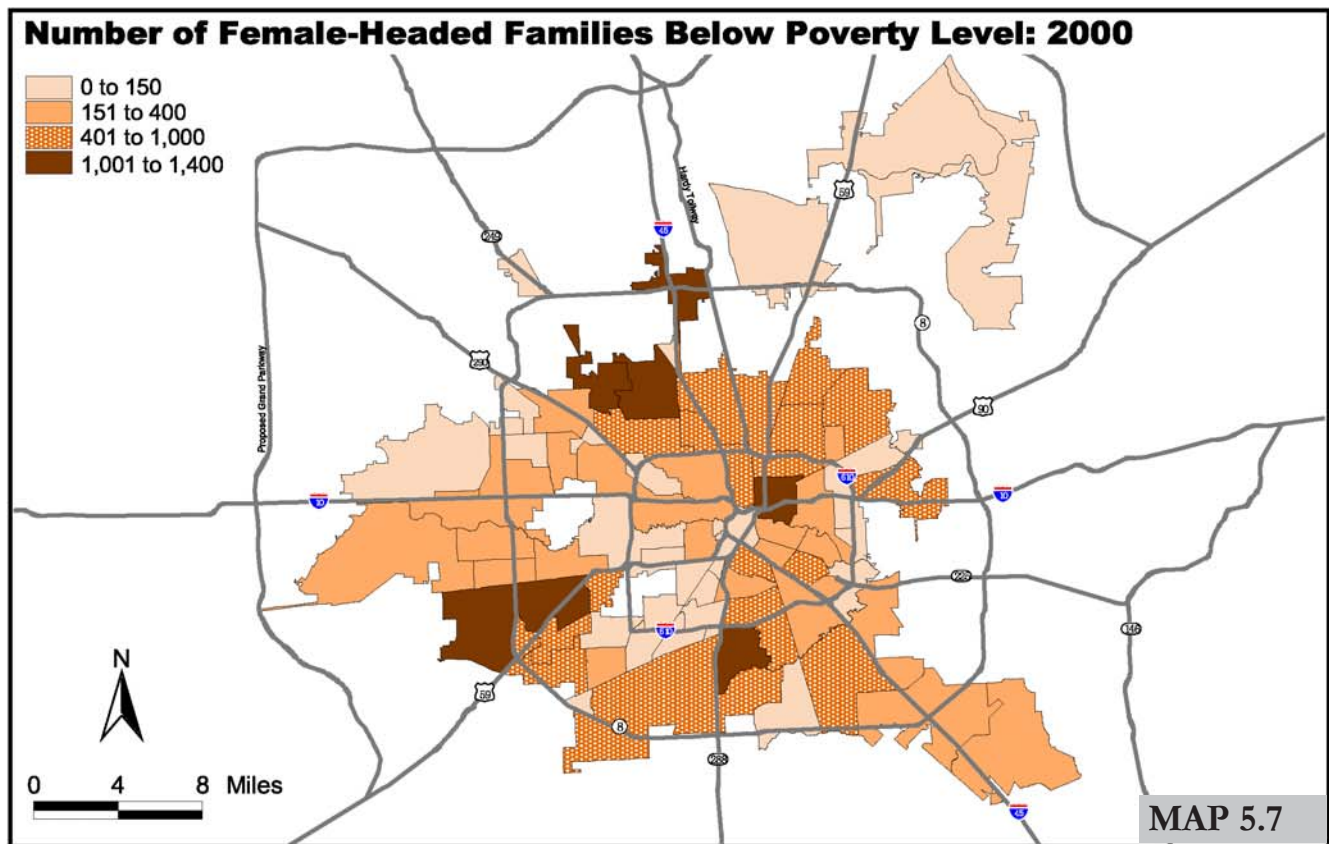
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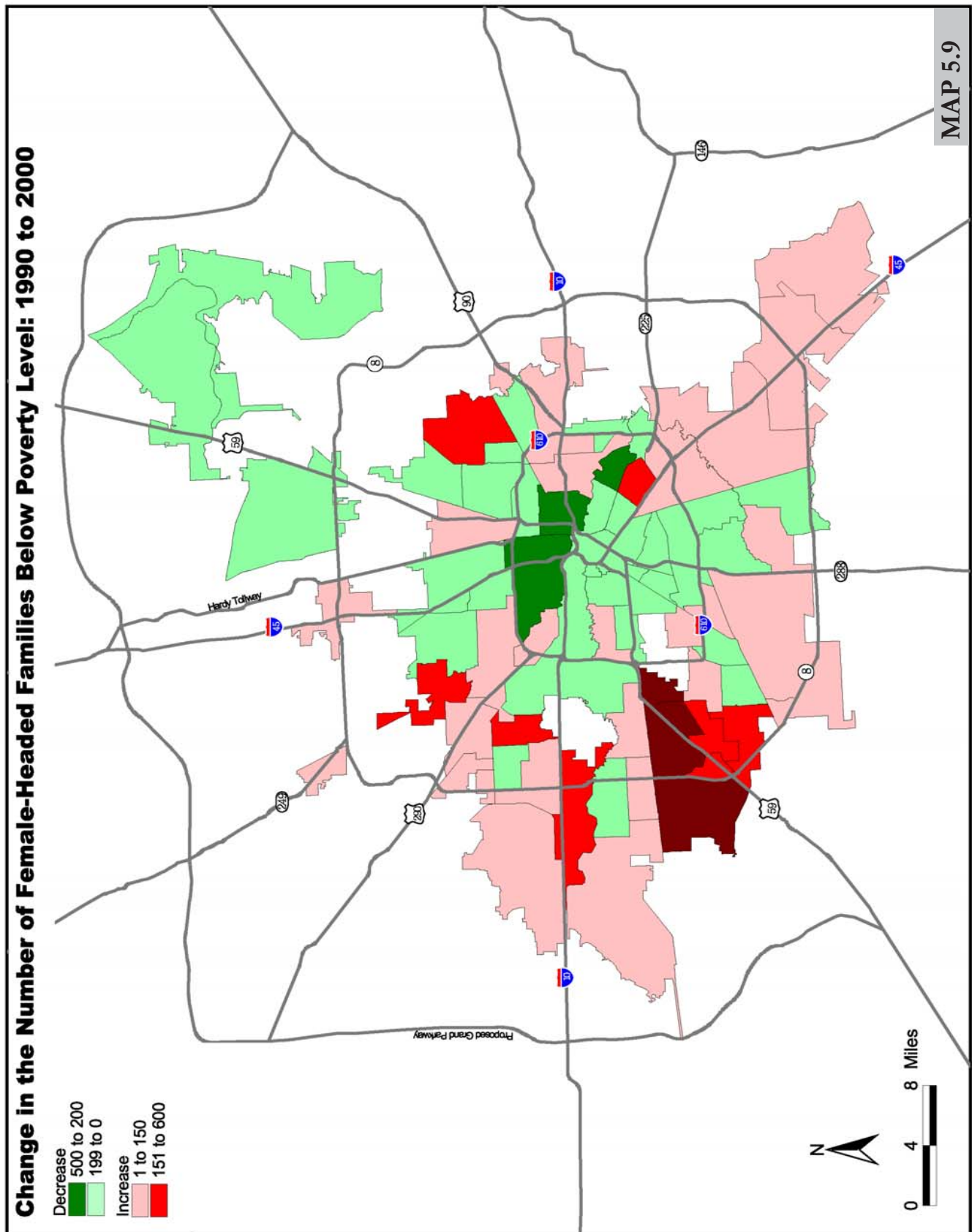
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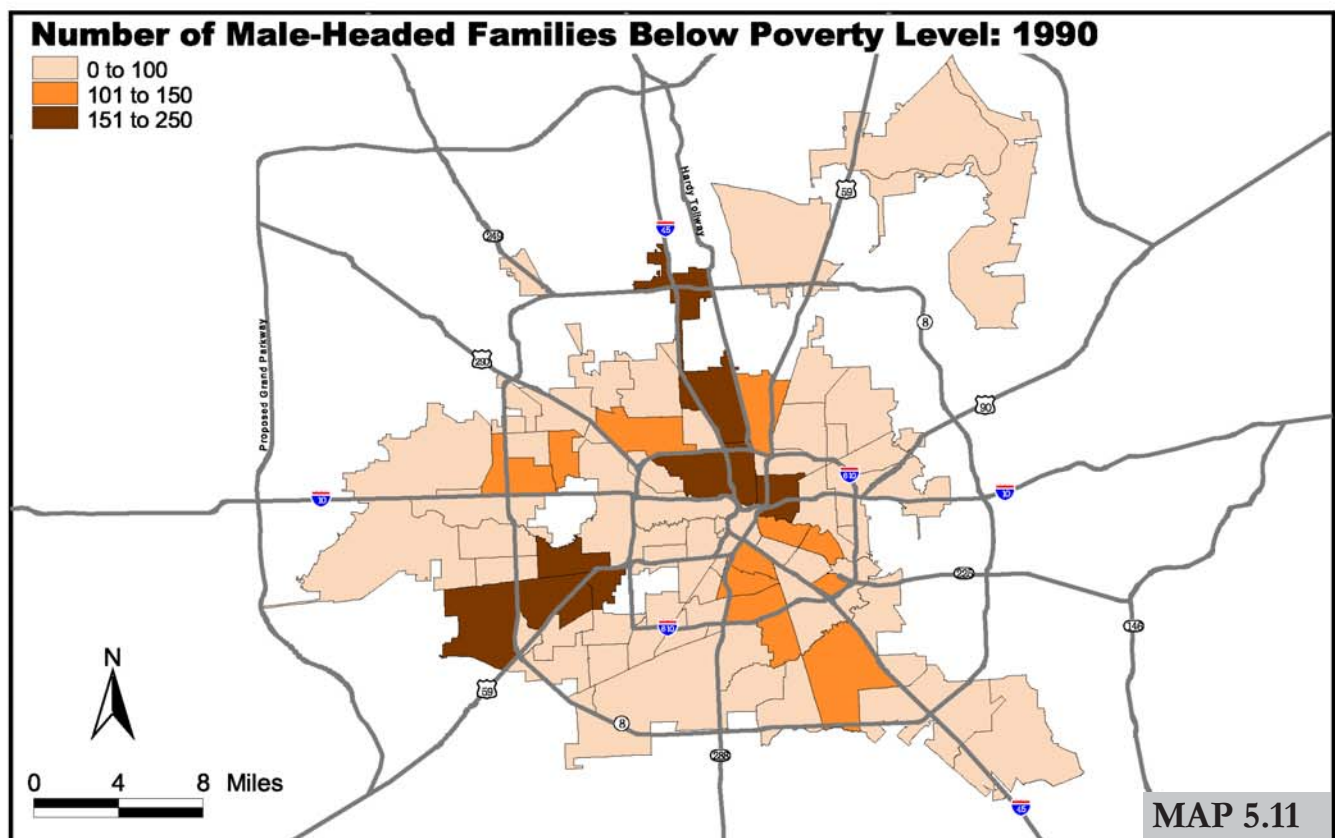
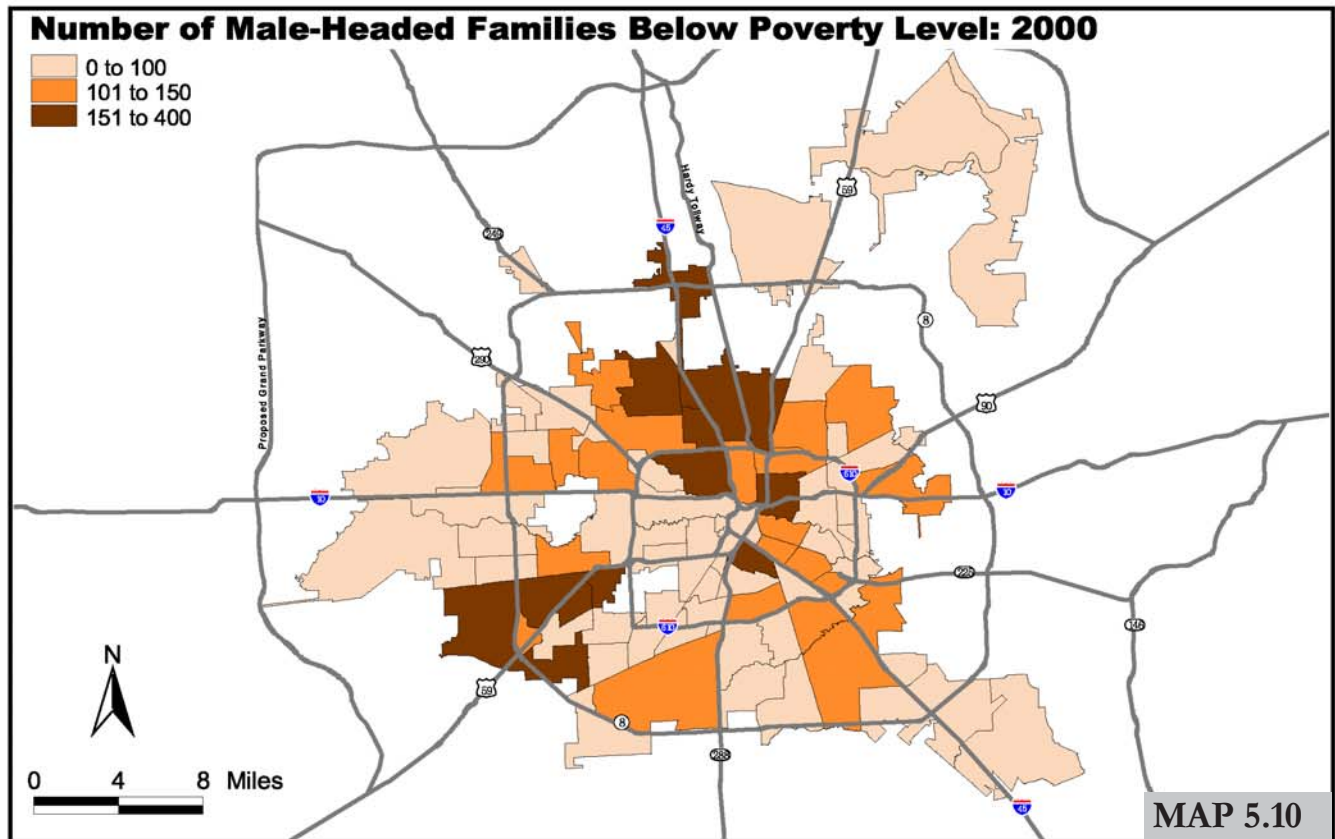
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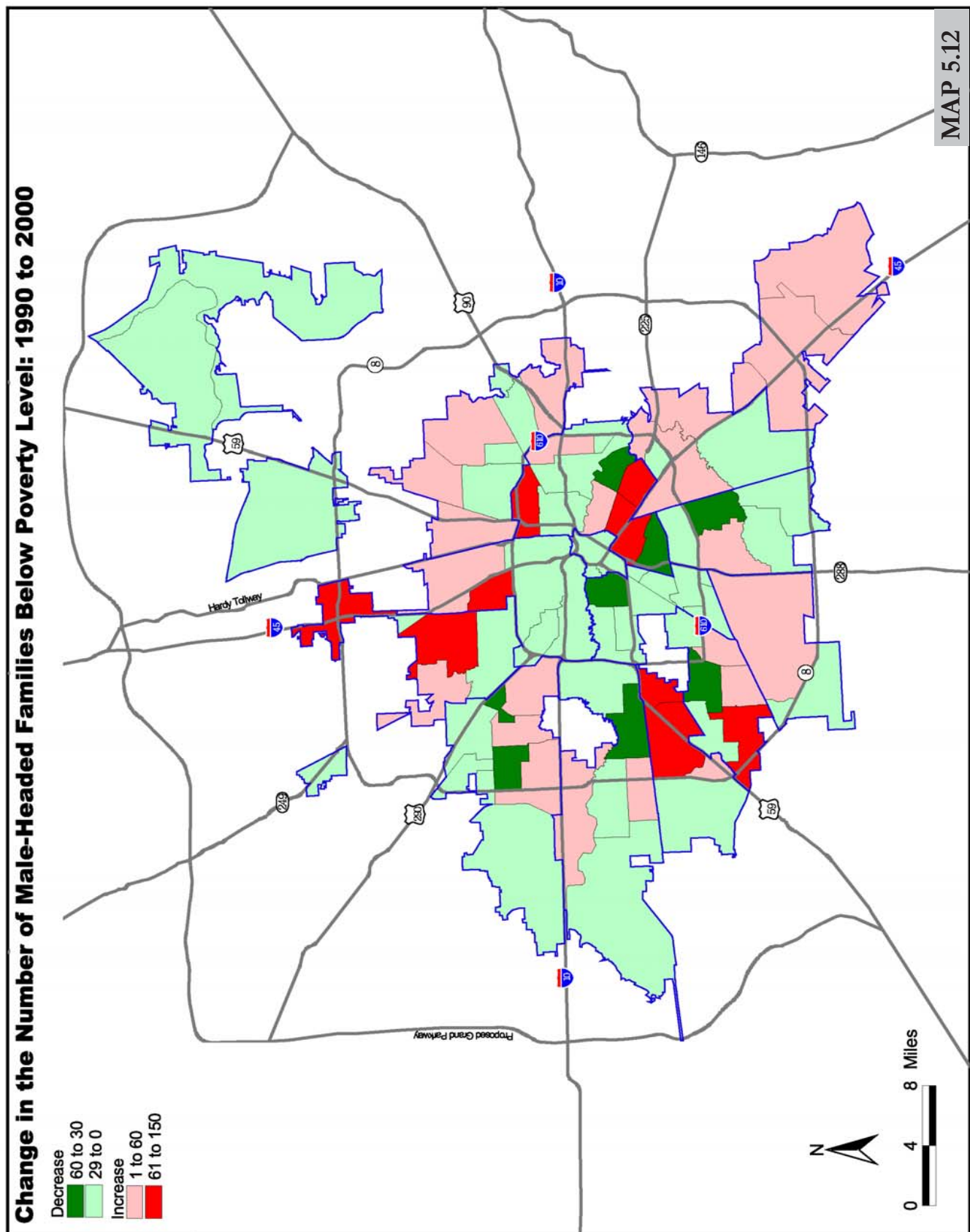
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POVERTY OF INDIVIDUALS BY AGE

The Census Bureau calculates poverty status by using 48 thresholds (income cutoffs) based on family size (from 1 person to 9 or more people), and number of family members under 18 years old (from no children present to 8 or more children present). To determine a person's poverty status, the person's total family income is compared with the poverty threshold appropriate for that person's family size and composition. If the total income of that person's family is less than the threshold appropriate for that family, then the person is considered poor, together with every member of his or her family. Poverty status is not determined for institutionalized people, people in military group quarters or in college dormitories and unrelated individuals under 15 years old.

Data on number of persons in poverty has been compiled for all 88 Super Neighborhoods in the City. 'High-poverty' Super Neighborhoods are those where more than 40% of the population is below poverty level. 'Medium-poverty' Super Neighborhoods are those where 20% to 40% of the population is below poverty level.

In 2000, about one fifth of the population in the City for whom poverty status is calculated was below poverty level. Poverty levels are the highest among children below 5 years, and lowest for seniors (See table).

There were 4 'high-poverty' neighborhoods in the City of Houston, with more than 40% of their population below poverty level. These are Greater Third Ward, Greater Fifth Ward, Downtown and Settegast. Half of the Super Neighborhoods in the City have 20% to 40% of their population below poverty level, and these are mostly in the eastern half of the City, with a few concentrated in the northwest and southwest (See map).

In 2000, Sharpstown, Alief and Gulfton had the largest number of persons below poverty (49,149 persons total). In 1990, Northside/Northline, Gulfton and Greater Fifth Ward had the largest number of persons below poverty (36,405 persons total). Both in 1990 and 2000, poverty level was the highest among children

Table 5.3
Poverty Status of All Persons

	Below 5 years		6 to 17 years	
	2000	1990	2000	1990
Persons Below Poverty level	51,985	49,712	87,498	80,006
Total Persons for whom poverty is calculated	188,148	138,799	339,851	
Percent of Population below Poverty Level	28%	36%	26%	
Number of Super Neighborhoods with 'High Poverty Levels'	17		16	
Number of Super Neighborhoods with 'Borderline Poverty Levels'	45		43	

	18 to 64 years		65+ years	
	2000	1990	2000	1990
Persons Below Poverty level	207,020	183,054	22,533	23,218
Total Persons for whom poverty is calculated	1,239,111		158,153	
Percent of Population below Poverty Level	17%		14%	
Number of Super Neighborhoods with 'High Poverty Levels'	3		3	
Number of Super Neighborhoods with 'Borderline Poverty Levels'	37		29	

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below 5 years. Between 1990 and 2000, number of persons below poverty level increased among all age groups, except among seniors, where it decreased slightly.

In general, most Super Neighborhoods inside Loop 610 experienced a decrease in population below poverty, while those on the edges of the City experienced increases, especially in the southwest. Magnolia Park, Greater Heights and Northside Village experienced the highest decreases, while Sharpstown, Alief, Gulfton, Braeburn and Greater Inwood gained the largest number of persons below poverty. However, the proportion of persons below poverty in each age group remained roughly about the same.

Poverty Status for Persons Under 5 years

In 2000, there were 188,149 children in the City under age 5 years. Of these, 28% were below poverty level, compared to 30% in 1990. In 2000, about one fifth of the Super Neighborhoods, mostly in the eastern half of the City had high poverty levels in this age group (more than 40% of population below poverty level), compared to one third of the Super Neighborhoods in 1990. Between 1990 and 2000, almost all Super Neighborhoods inside Loop 610 lost population in this category. Greater Heights, Northside Village and Magnolia Park lost more than 600 such persons. Several adjacent Super Neighborhoods in the southwest outside Loop 610 experienced the

Table 5.4

Persons below Poverty Level by Age

	2000	Percent	1990	Percent	Change
5 years & Under	51,986	14.1%	49,712	14.8%	2,274
6 yrs to 17 yrs	87,501	23.7%	80,006	23.8%	7,495
18 yrs to 64 yrs	207,021	56.1%	183,054	54.5%	23,967
65 & over	22,537	6.1%	23,218	6.9%	-681
Total	369,045	100.0%	335,990	100.0%	33,055

Figure 5.1

Persons below Poverty Level by Age: 2000

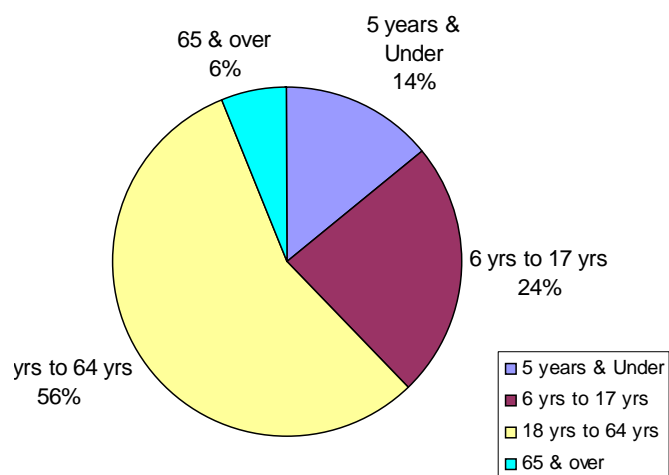
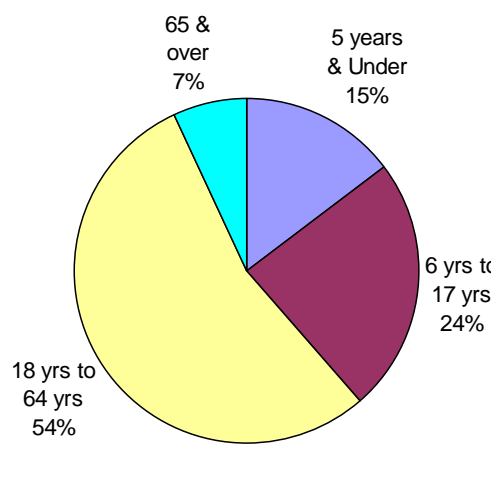


Figure 5.2

Persons below Poverty Level by Age: 1990



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largest increases, with Sharpstown, Gulfton, Alief, Braeburn and Westwood together gaining 3,882 persons (See map).

Poverty Status for Persons 6 to 17 years

In 2000 87,501 persons in the City were between 6 and 17 years of age. Of these, 26% were below poverty level, compared to 28% in 1990. In 2000, almost one fifth of the Super Neighborhoods, mostly in the eastern half of the City had high poverty levels in this age group (more than 40% of population below poverty level), compared to almost one third of the Super Neighborhoods in 1990. Between 1990 and 2000, almost all Super Neighborhoods inside Loop 610 lost population in this category. Greater Heights and Magnolia Park together lost 2,153 persons, while Alief and Sharpstown together gained 3,764 persons.

Poverty Status for Persons 18 to 64 years

Both in 1990 and 2000, 17% of all persons 18 to 64 years were in poverty, and they concentrated in Super Neighborhoods north of Downtown and outside Loop 610 in the southwest. In 2000, Sharpstown, Gulfton and Alief together accounted for 28,422 persons, while in 1990, Gulfton, Sharpstown and Northside/Northline together accounted for 20,419 persons. Both in 1990 and 2000, Greater Fifth Ward, Greater Third Ward and Settegast had high poverty levels in this age group (more than 40% of population below poverty level).

Between 1990 and 2000, Super Neighborhoods north of Downtown experienced the largest decreases, while those in the southwest experienced the largest increases. Sharpstown,

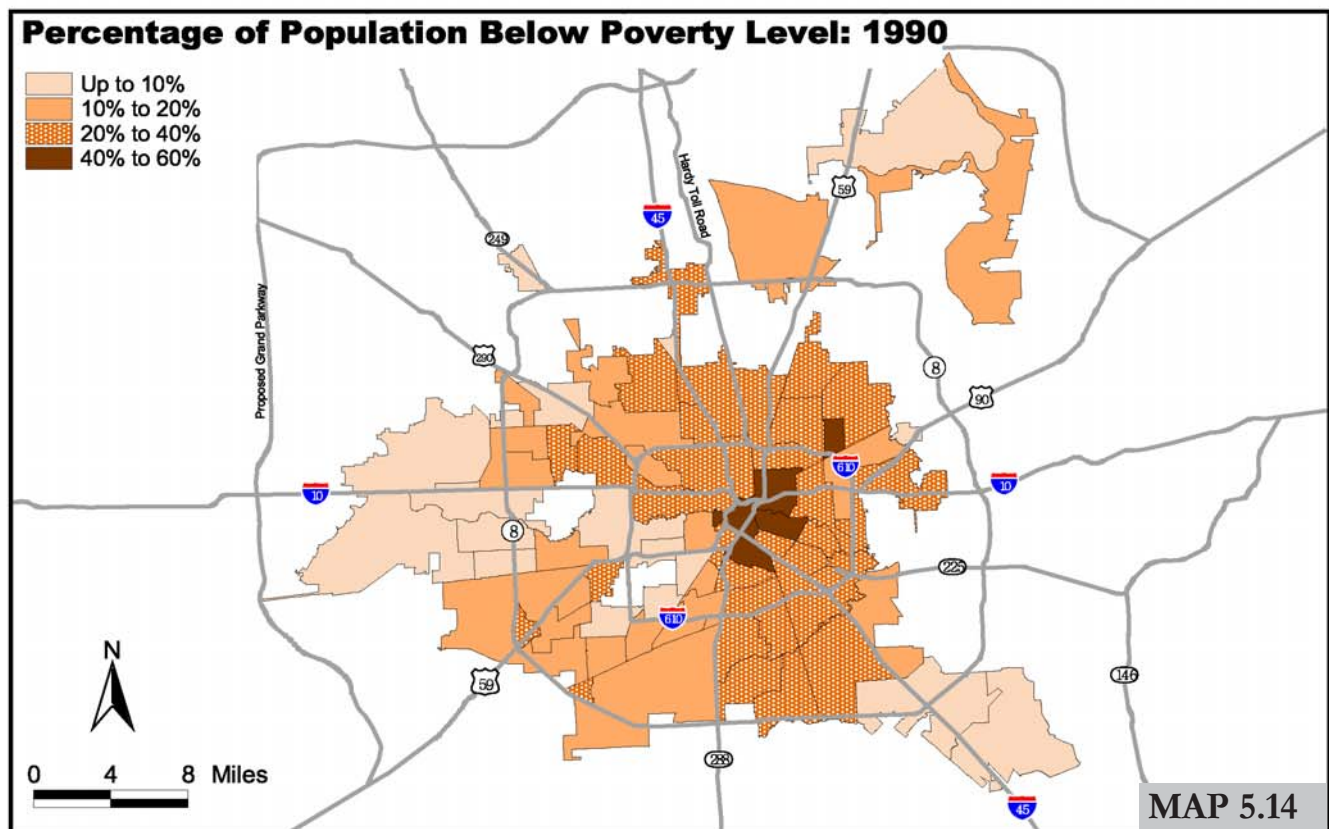
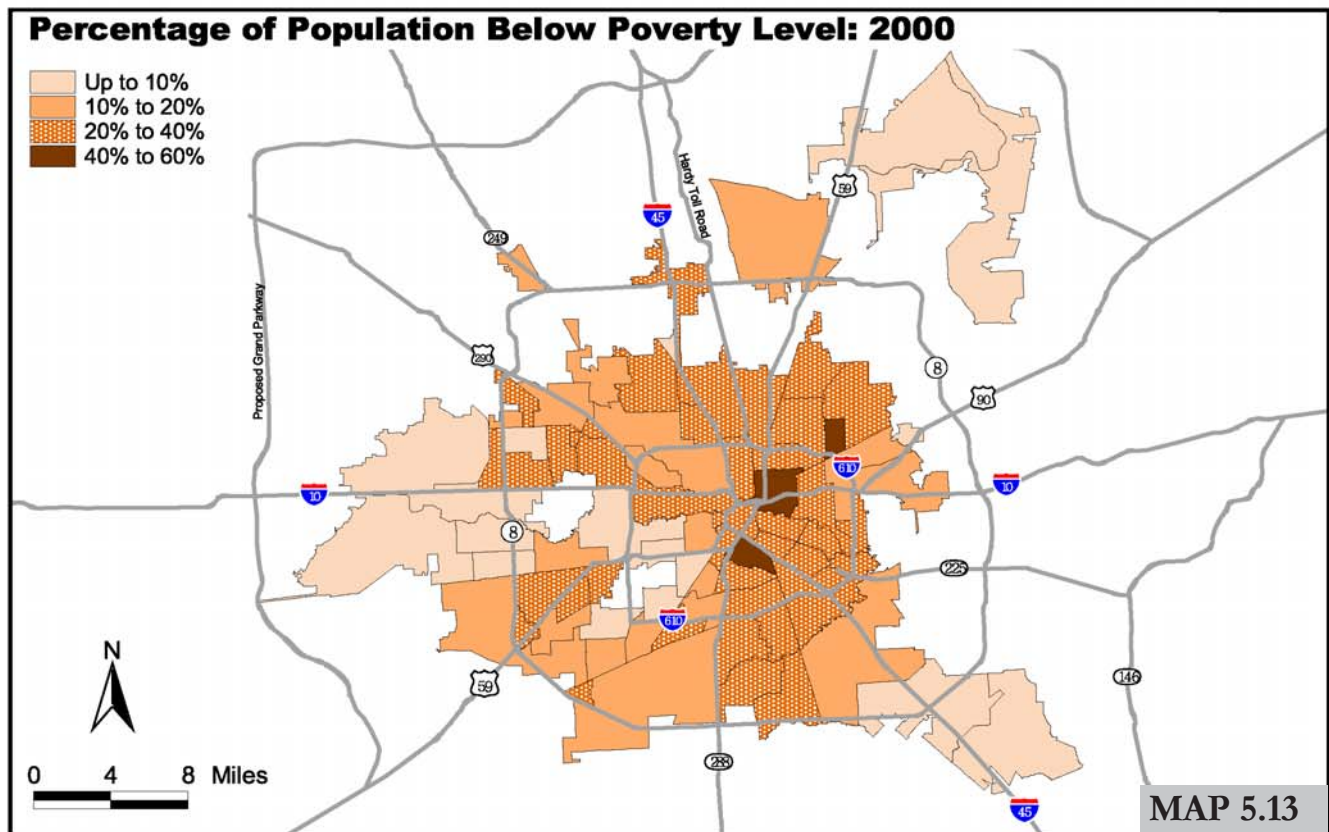
Alief, Woodlake/Briar Meadow and Gulfton experienced the largest increases together accounting for 10,935 persons, while Magnolia Park, Greater Heights, Northside Village and Greater Fifth Ward together lost 4,442 persons in this age group (See map).

Poverty Status for Persons 65+ years

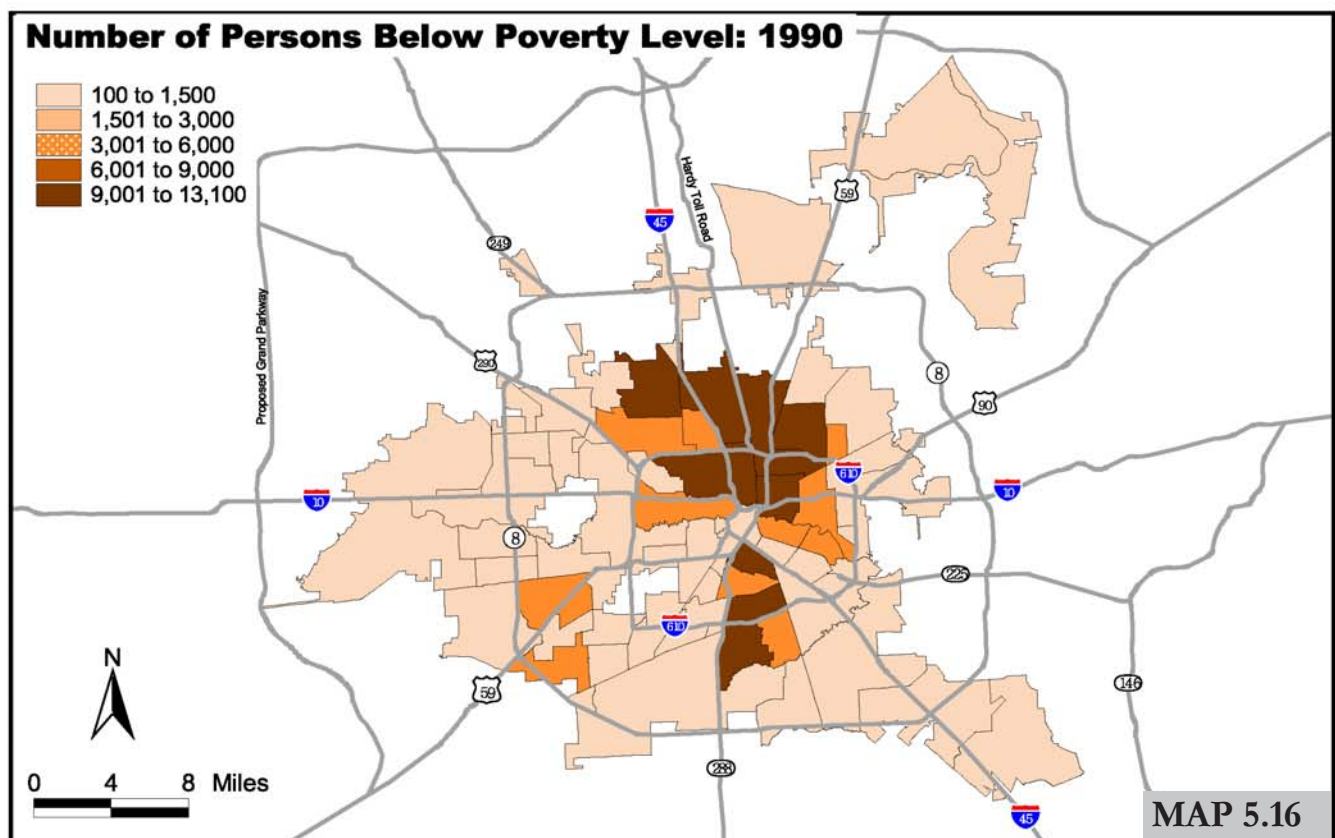
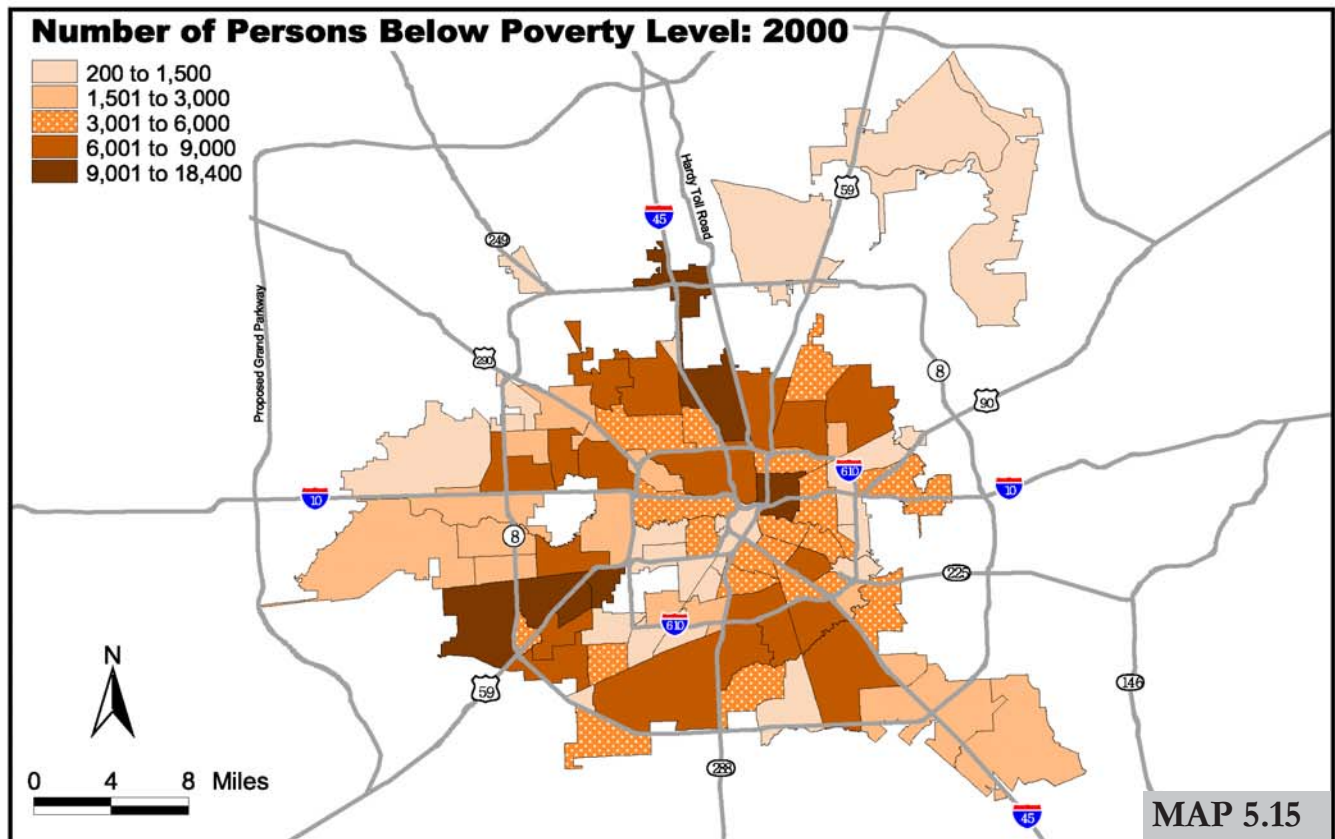
In 2000, 14% of the population 65 years and more was below poverty level, compared to 18% in 1990. In 1990, they were concentrated in Super Neighborhoods in the northern portion of the City, while in 2000, they were concentrated in the northern as well as southwestern portions of the City. In 2000, Greater Fifth Ward, Sunnyside and Northside/Northline each had over 900 seniors below poverty; while in 1990, Greater Fifth Ward, Sunnyside and Acres Homes had the largest poor senior population, each with more than 1,100 persons.

Both in 1990 and 2000, Fourth Ward, Downtown and Greater Fifth Ward had high poverty levels (more than 40% of seniors below poverty level). Between 1990 and 2000, as with other age groups, Super Neighborhoods inside Loop 610 north of Downtown experienced the largest decrease in the number of seniors below poverty, while those in the southwest experienced the largest increases. Greater Third Ward and Acres Homes together lost 820 persons, while Alief and Sharpstown together gained 887 persons (See table).

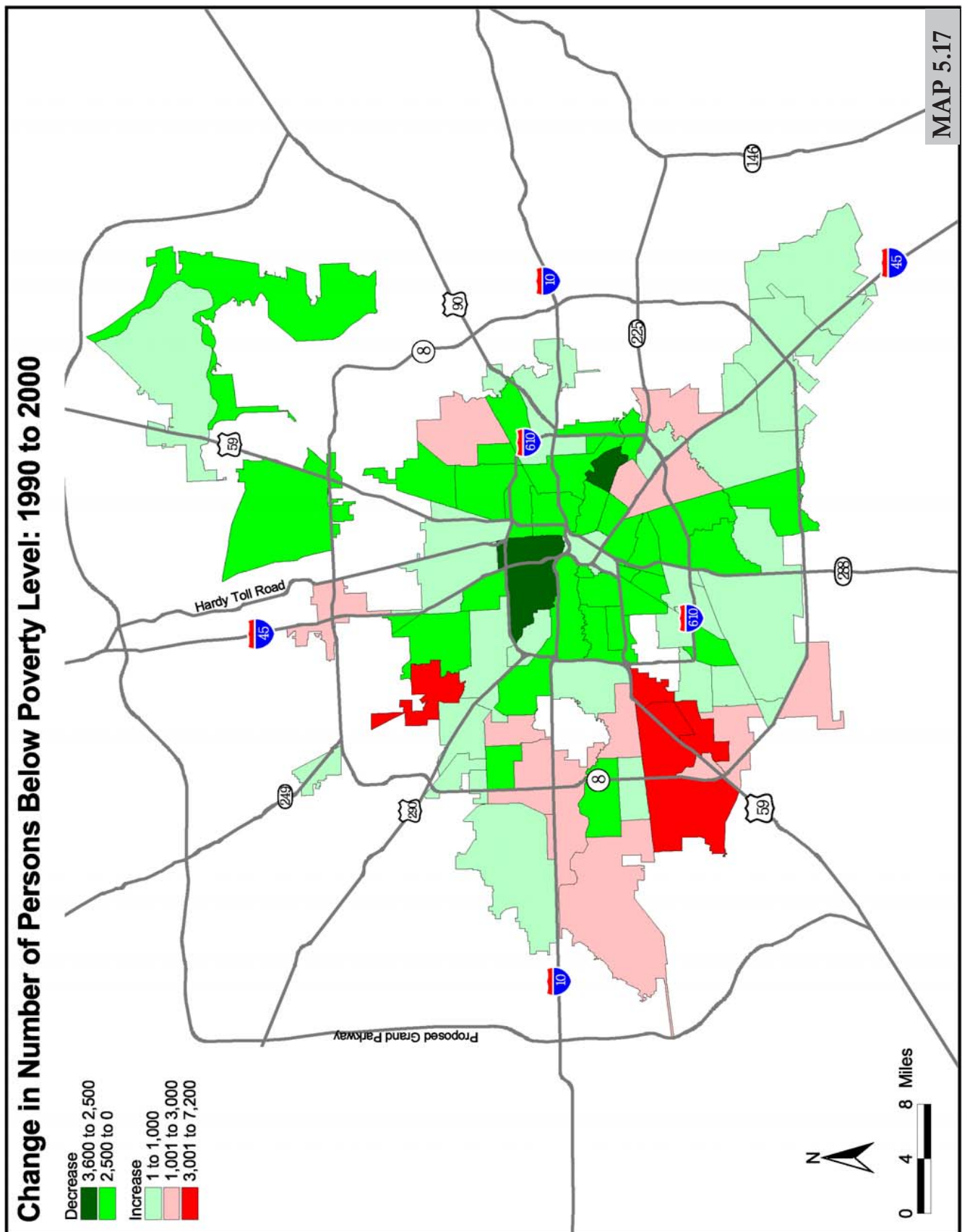
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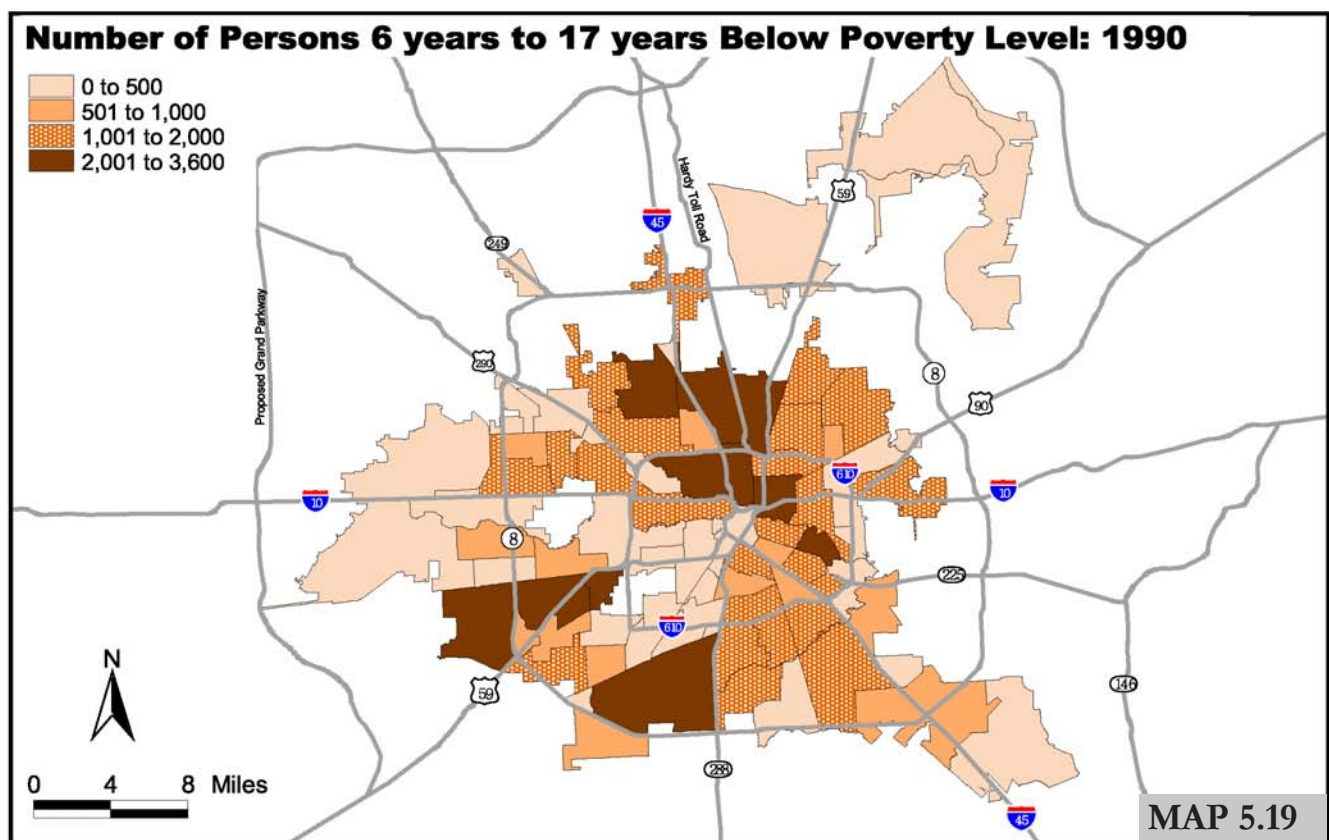
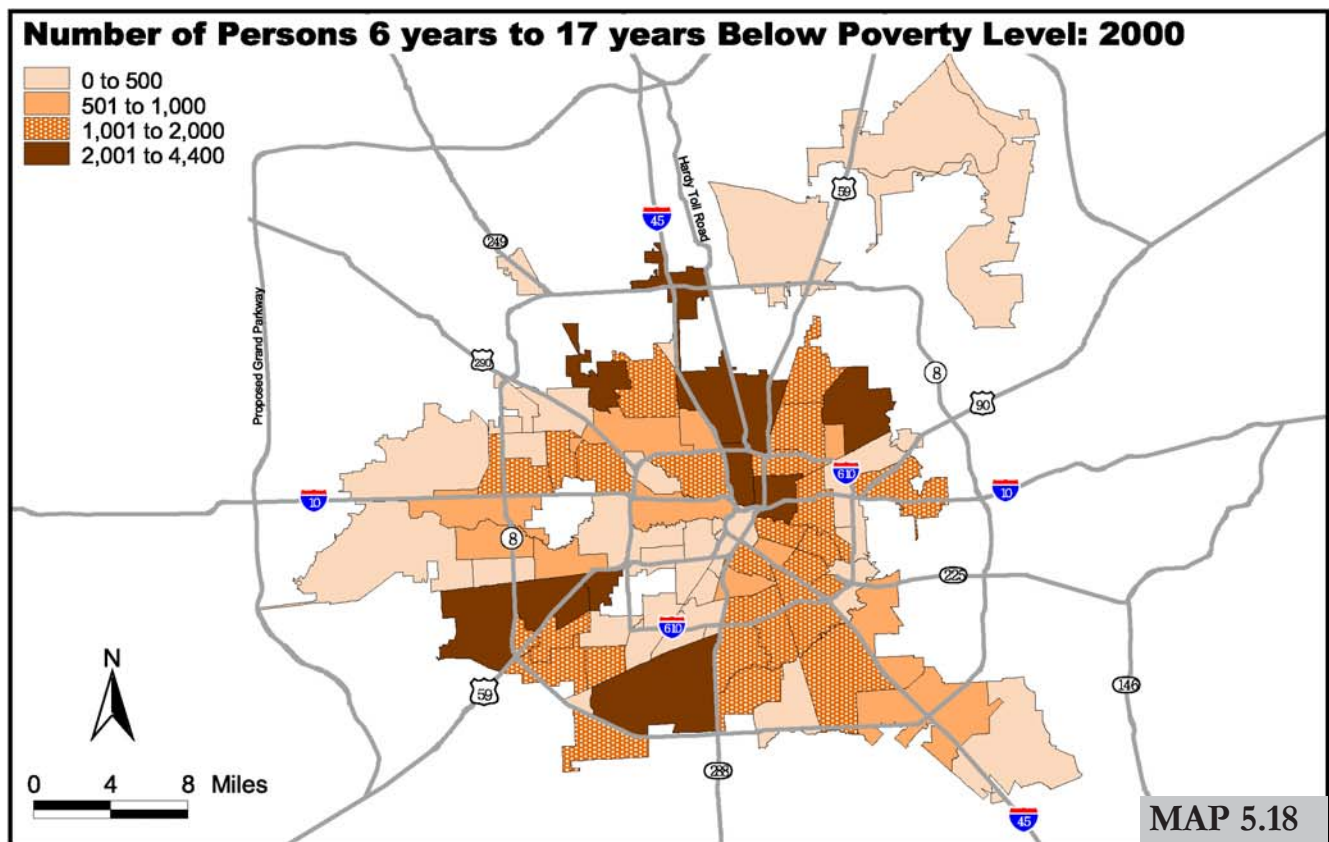
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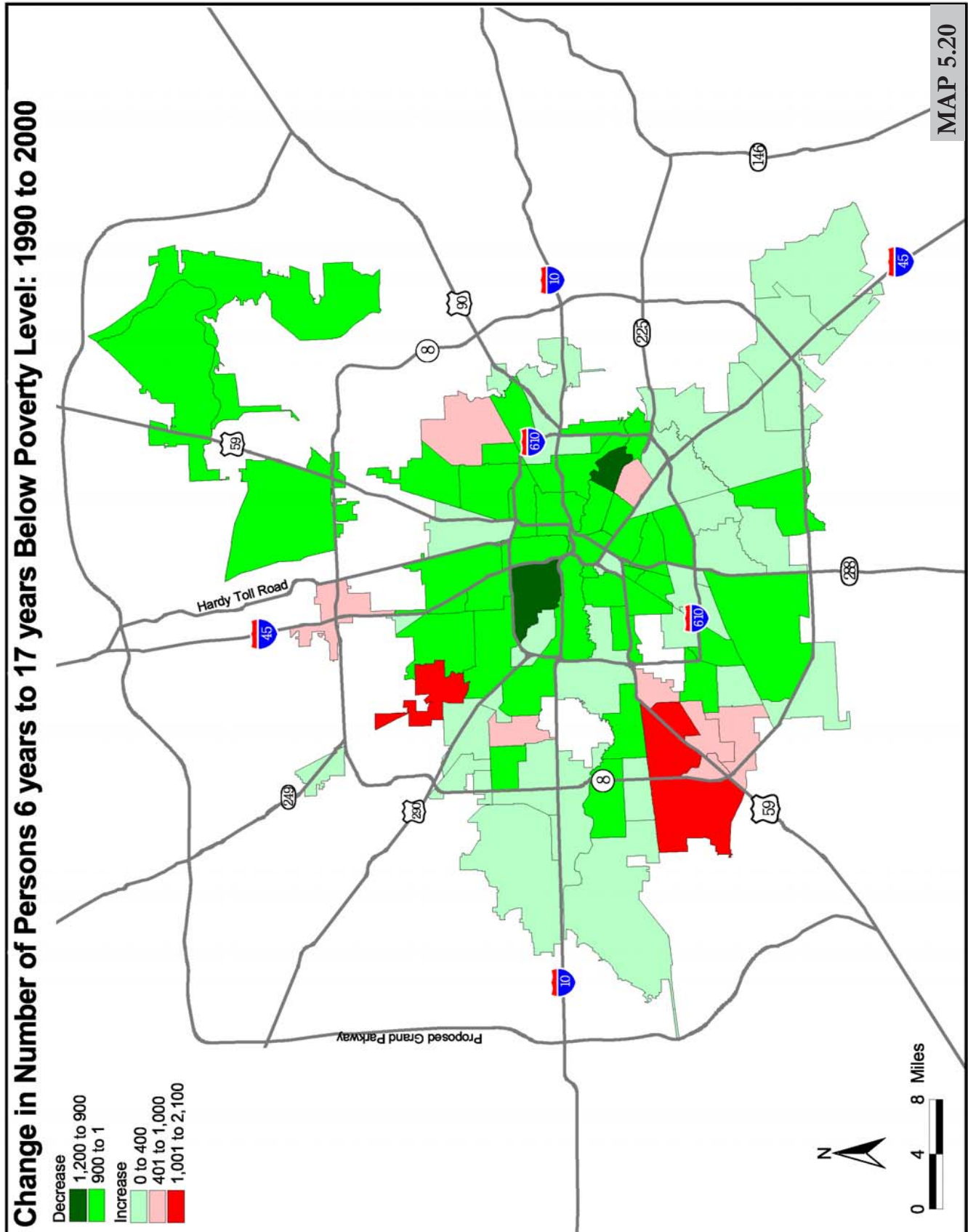
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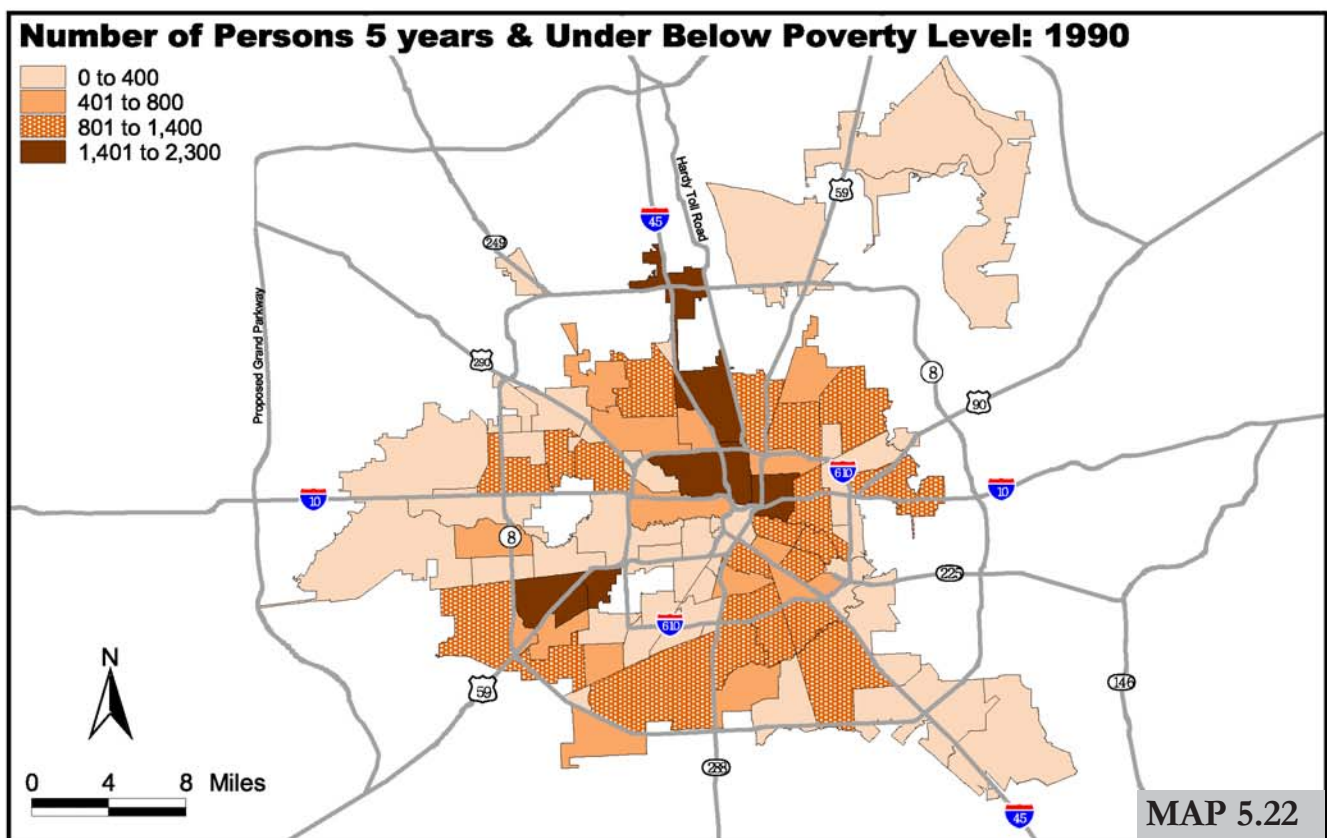
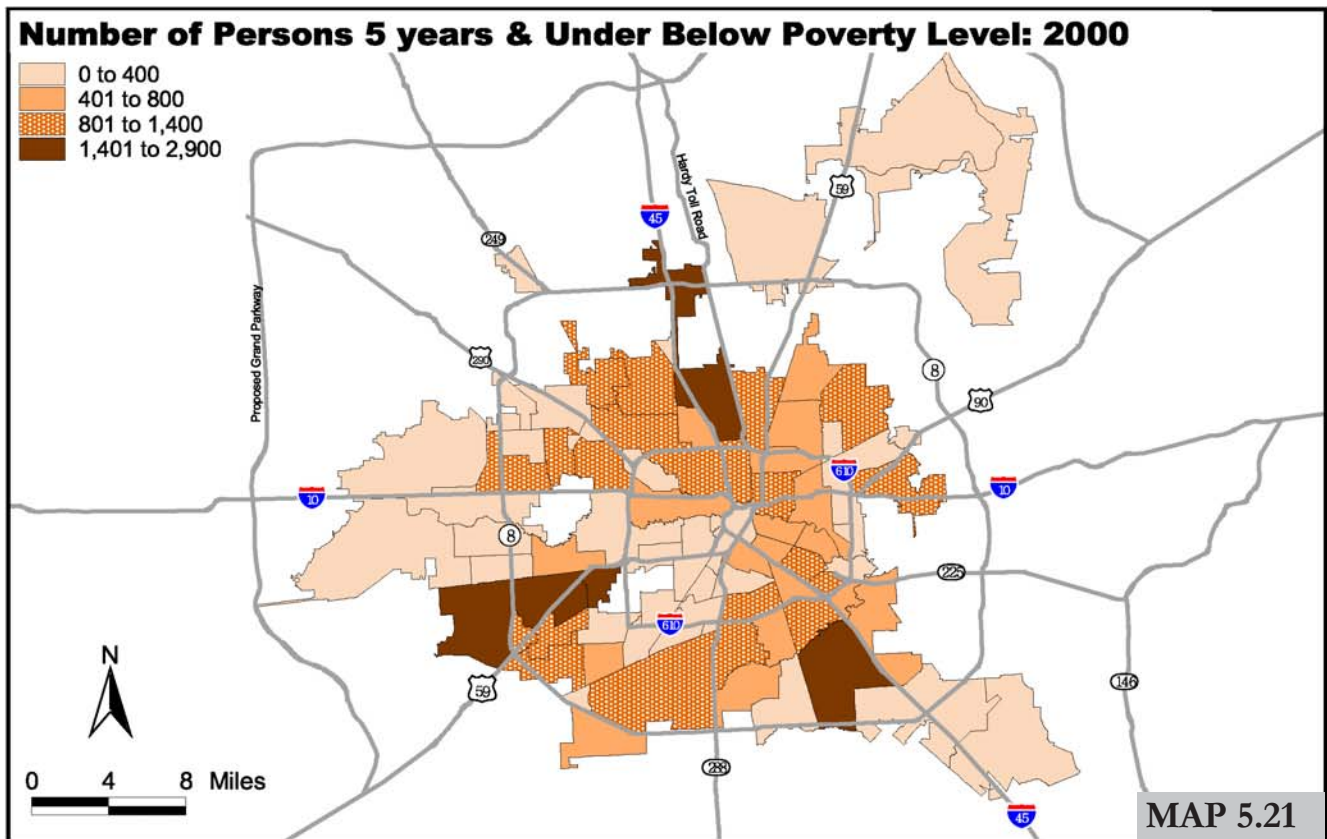
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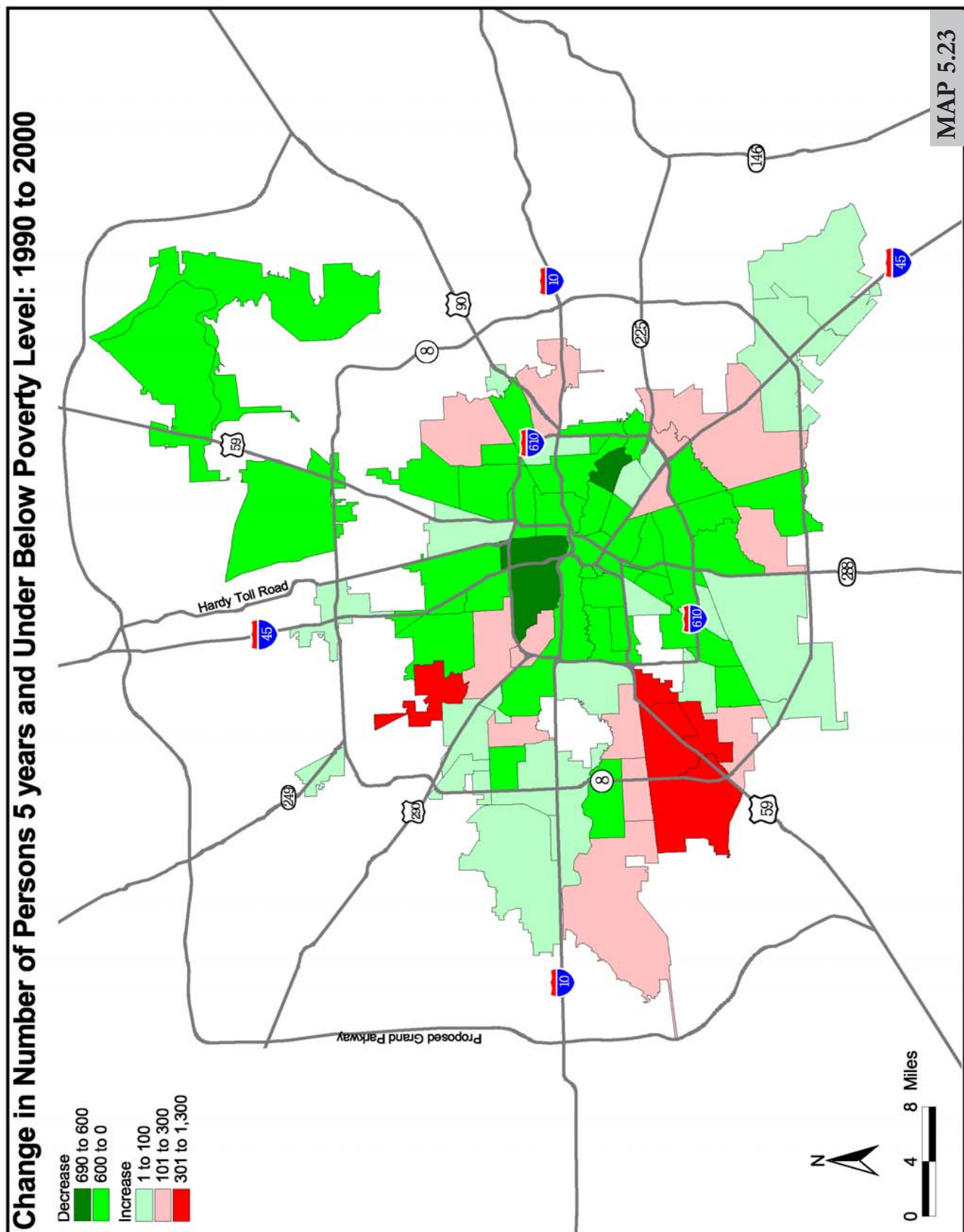
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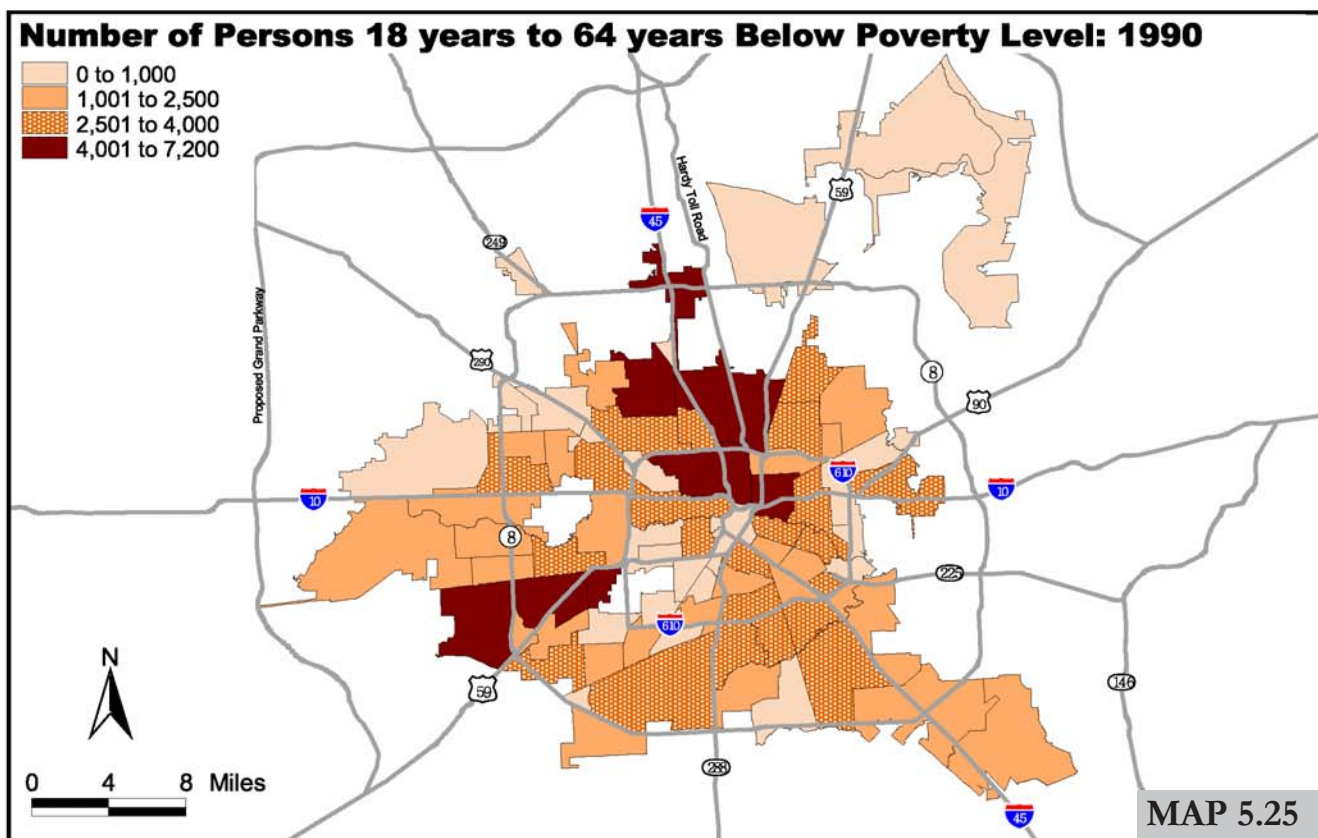
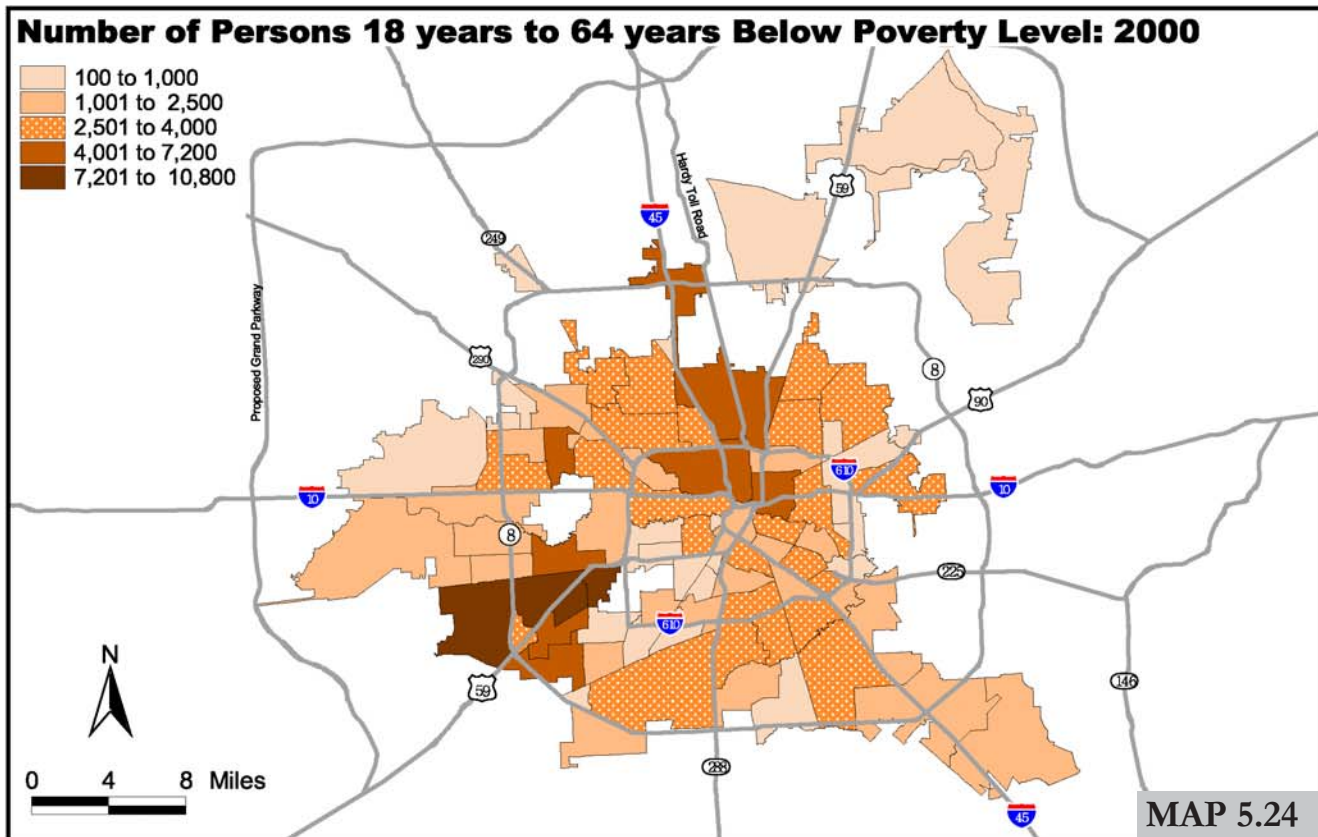
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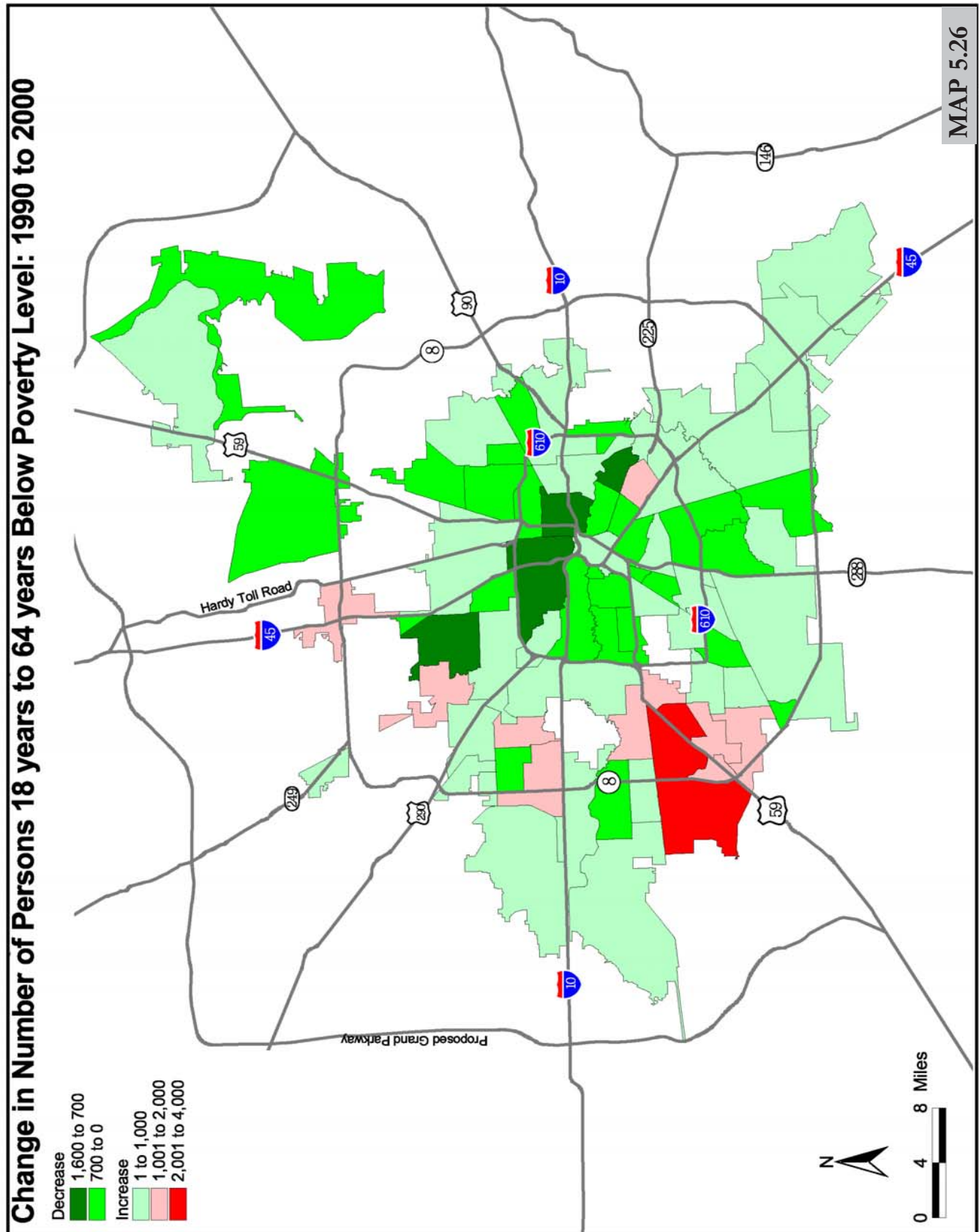
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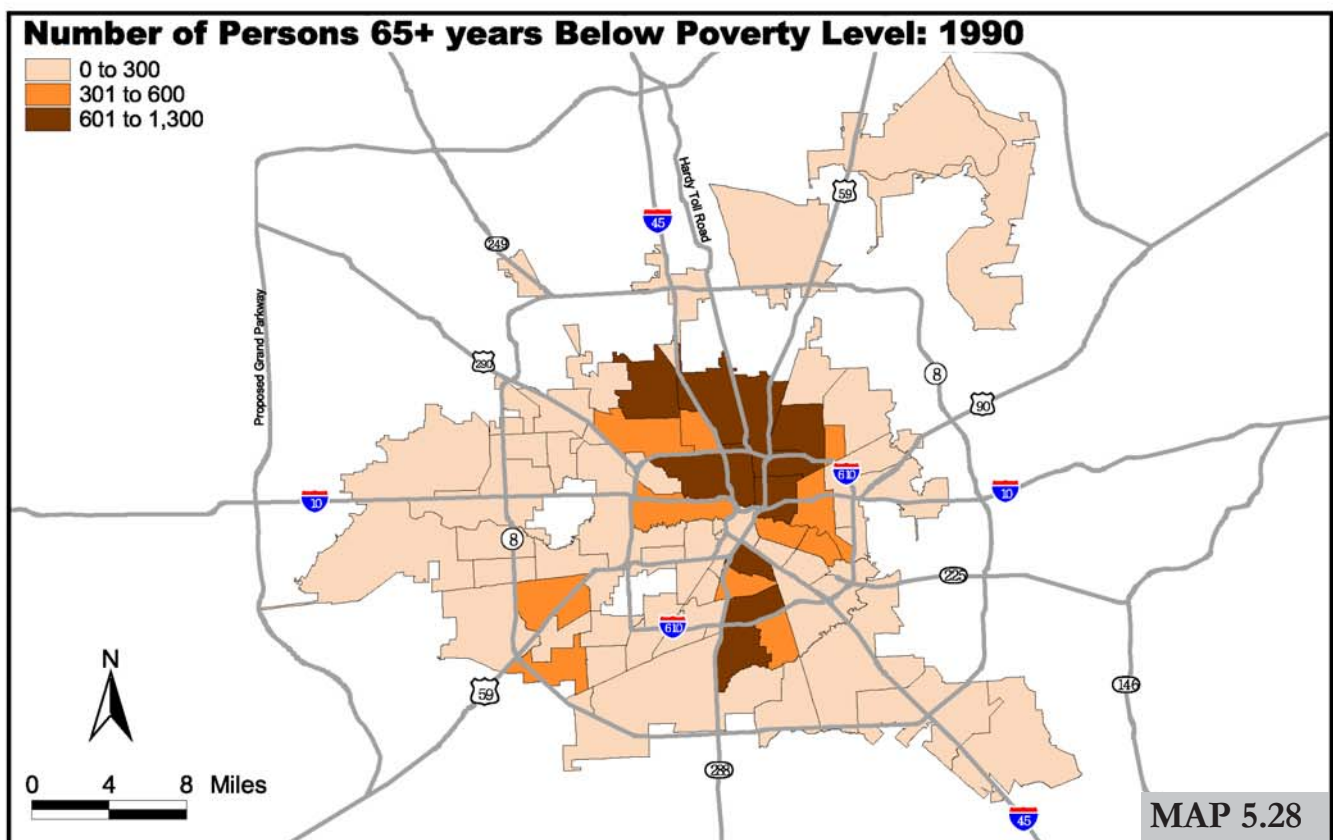
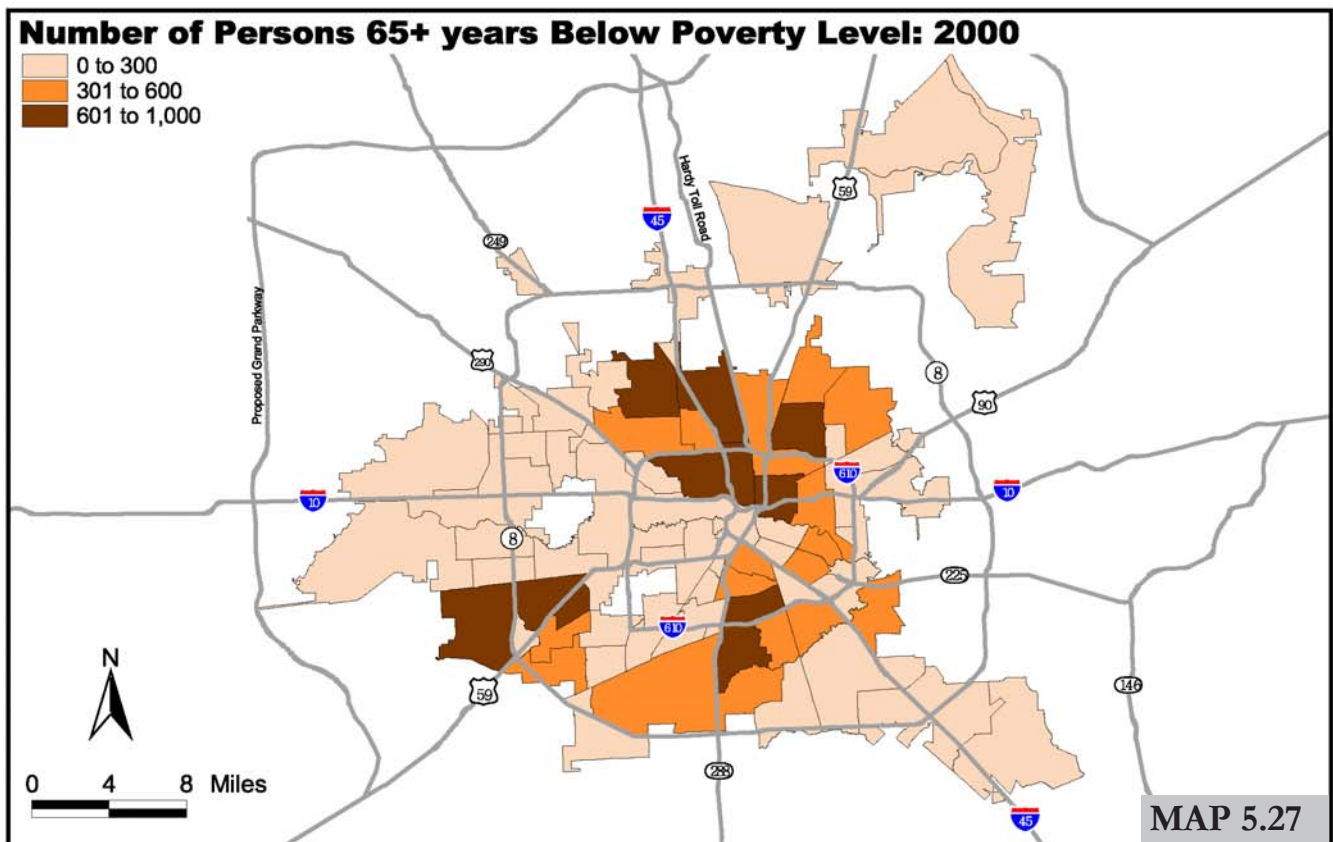
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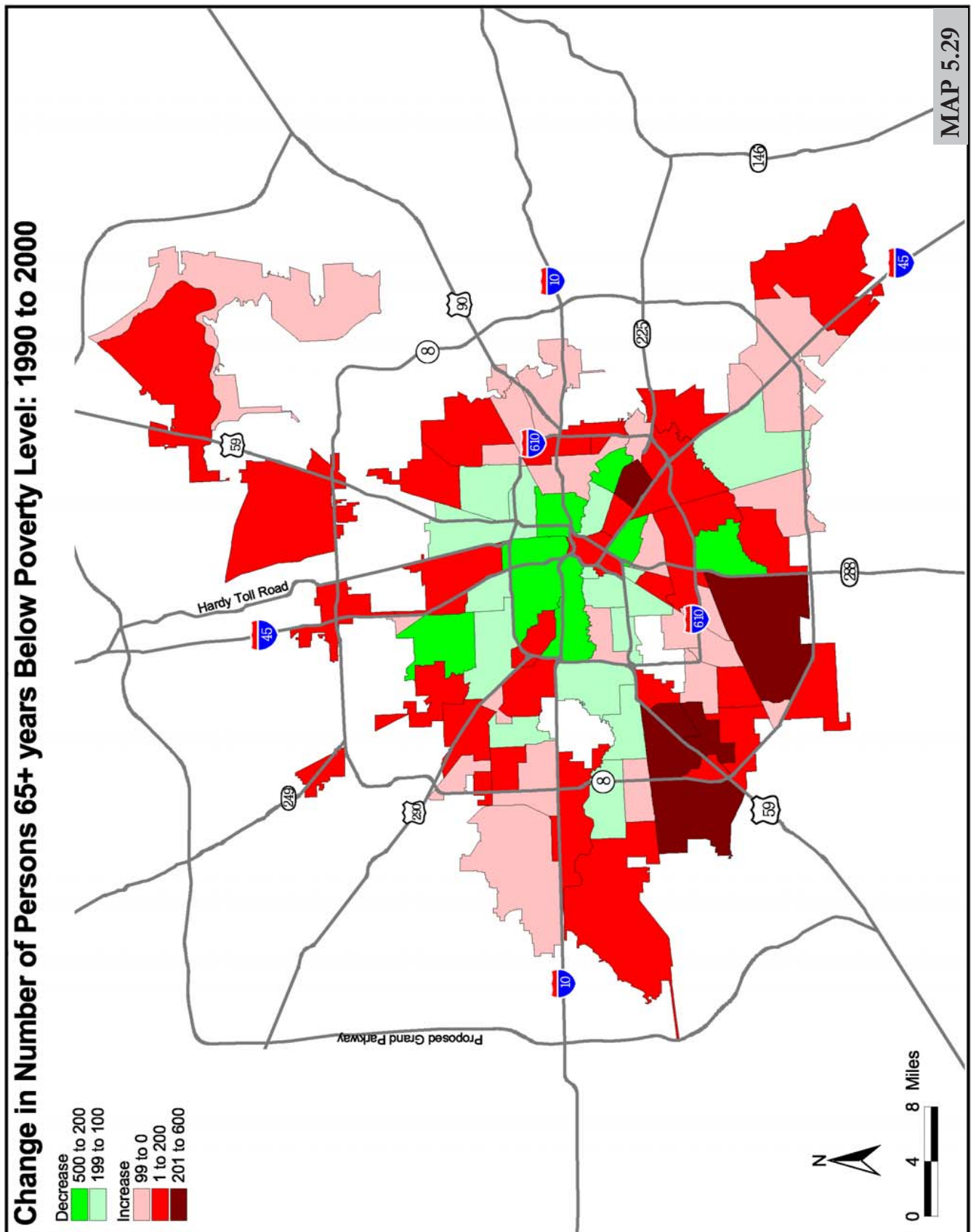
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RATIO OF INCOME TO POVERTY

The ratio of income-to-poverty provides a picture of the total number of persons living in poverty. Ratios below 1.00 indicate that the income for the respective family or unrelated individual is below the official definition of poverty, while a ratio of 1.00 or greater indicates income above the poverty level. A ratio of 1.25, for example, is 25% above the appropriate poverty level.

In 2000, there were 369,045 persons below poverty level, representing a 10% increase over 1990. (See table)

In 2000, most Super Neighborhoods inside Loop 610 experienced decreases in the number of persons below poverty, while Super Neighborhoods outside Loop 610 and on the edges of the city gained persons below poverty level. The highest decreases were north of downtown, while the highest increases were in the southwest outside Loop 610, in Sharpstown, Gulfton and Alief. (See map)

Under 50%

Almost half of all persons below poverty level have incomes that are less than 50% of the poverty threshold. In 2000, the largest numbers of persons with incomes less than 50% of the poverty threshold were in the southwest outside Loop 610, and north of downtown. Sharpstown, Alief and Gulfton each had over 6,000 such persons. Highest concentrations occur in Super Neighborhoods inside Loop 610. In 1990, Super Neighborhoods north of Downtown had the largest numbers of persons with incomes less than 50% of the poverty threshold. Greater Fifth Ward, and Northside/Northline each had over 6,200 such persons.

Between 1990 and 2000, Super Neighborhoods north and east of downtown lost the largest numbers of such persons, while Super Neighborhoods in the southwest gained the highest numbers. Sharpstown and Alief together gained 3,773 such persons, while Greater Heights, Magnolia Park and Northside Village together lost 5,731 persons.

50 to 74%

In 2000, the largest numbers of persons with incomes between 50% and 75% of the poverty threshold were in the southwest outside Loop 610. Sharpstown, Alief and Gulfton together accounted for 13,068 such persons. In 1990, the highest numbers were north of Downtown. Greater Heights and Northside/Northline together accounted for 7,394 such persons. Between 1990 and 2000, Super Neighborhoods north of downtown lost population in this category, while those in the southwest gained population. Sharpstown and Alief together gained 4,095 persons while Acres Homes, Northside Village and Memorial Park/Washington Avenue together lost 1,757 such persons. (See map)

75 to 99%

In 2000, the largest numbers of persons with incomes between 75% and 99% of the poverty threshold were in the southwest outside Loop 610. Sharpstown, Alief and Gulfton together accounted for 16,621 such persons. In 1990, they were in Greater Heights and Northside/Northline which together accounted for 7,394 such persons. Between 1990 and 2000, Sharpstown, Gulfton and Alief together gained 7,091 such persons, while Greater Heights and Magnolia Park together lost 2,272 such persons.

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Table 5.5
Number of Persons Below Poverty Level by Ratio of Income to Poverty Level

	2000	Percent	1990	Percent
Under 0.5	171,583	46.5%	164,979	49.1%
0.5 to 0.74	92,969	25.2%	79,047	23.5%
0.75 to 0.99	104,493	28.3%	91,977	27.4%
Total	369,045	100.0%	336,003	100.0%

Figure 5.3
Ratio of Income to Poverty Level: 2000

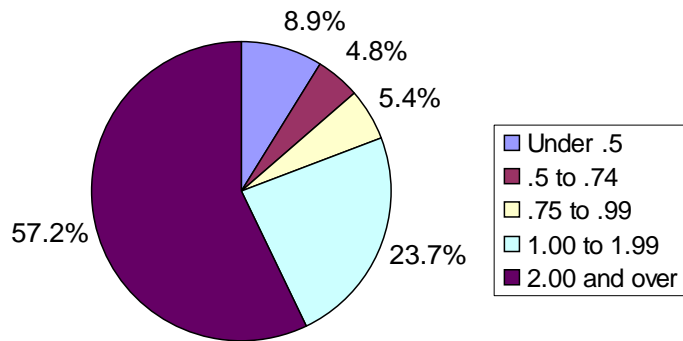
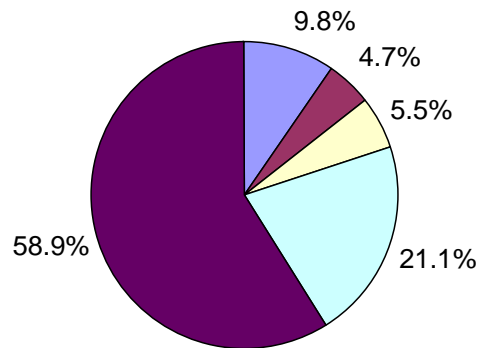
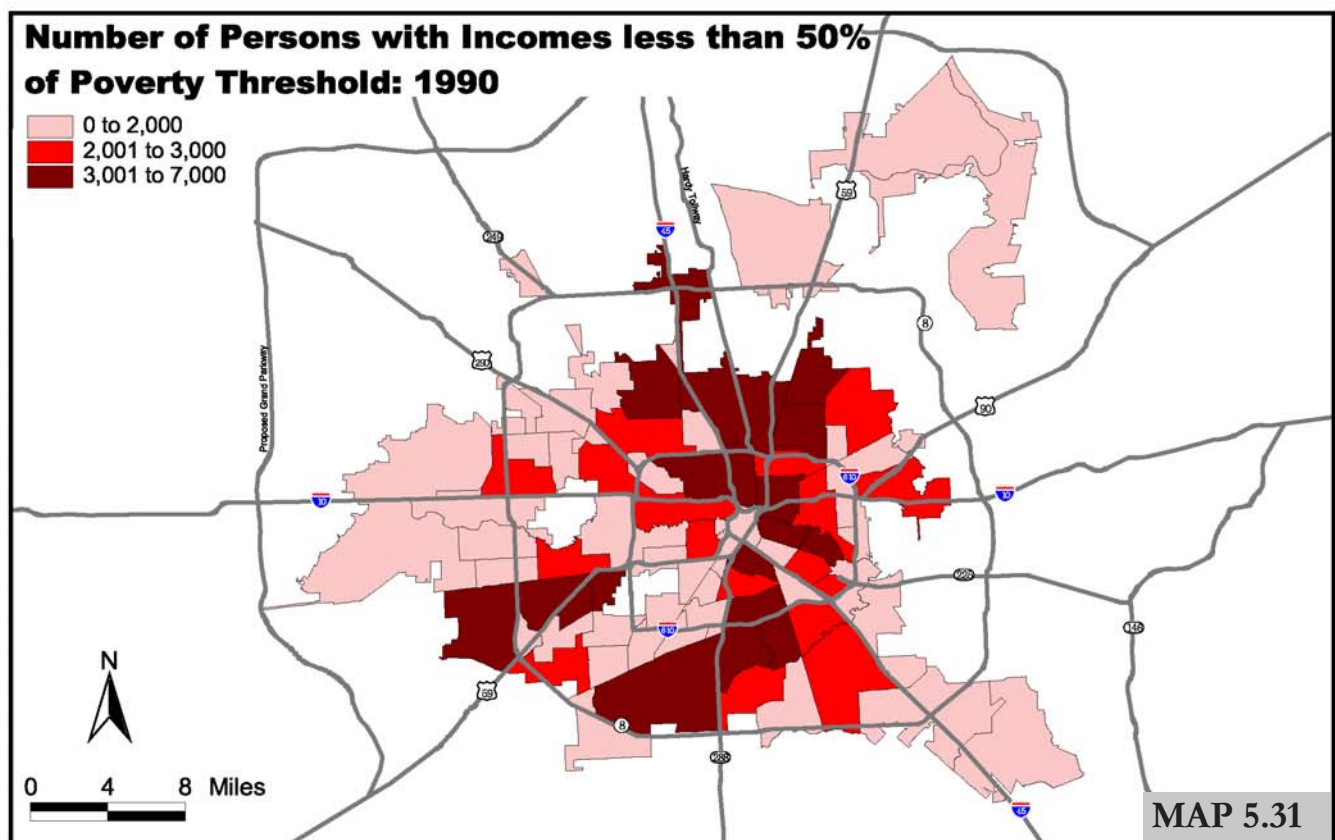
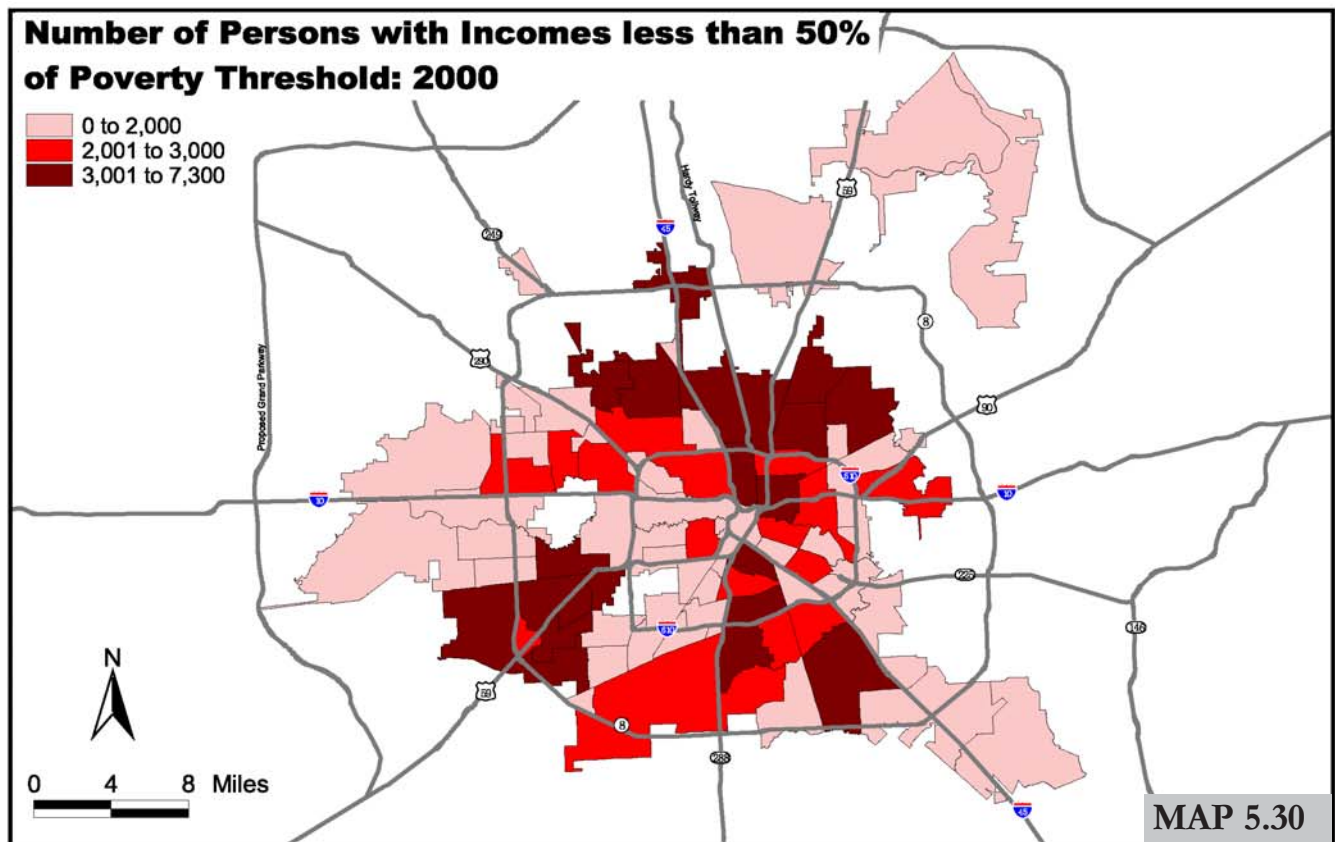


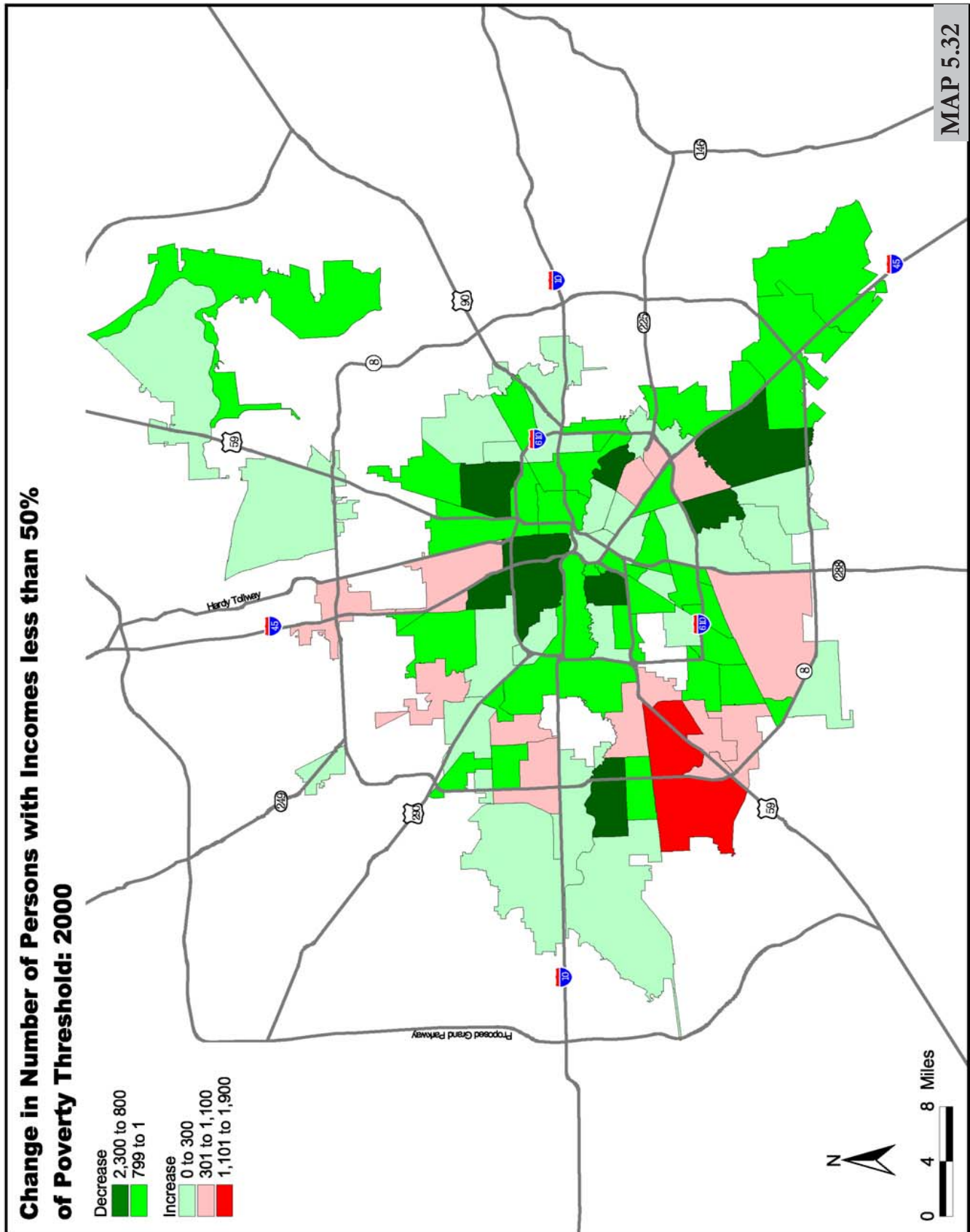
Figure 5.4
Ratio of Income to Poverty Level: 1990



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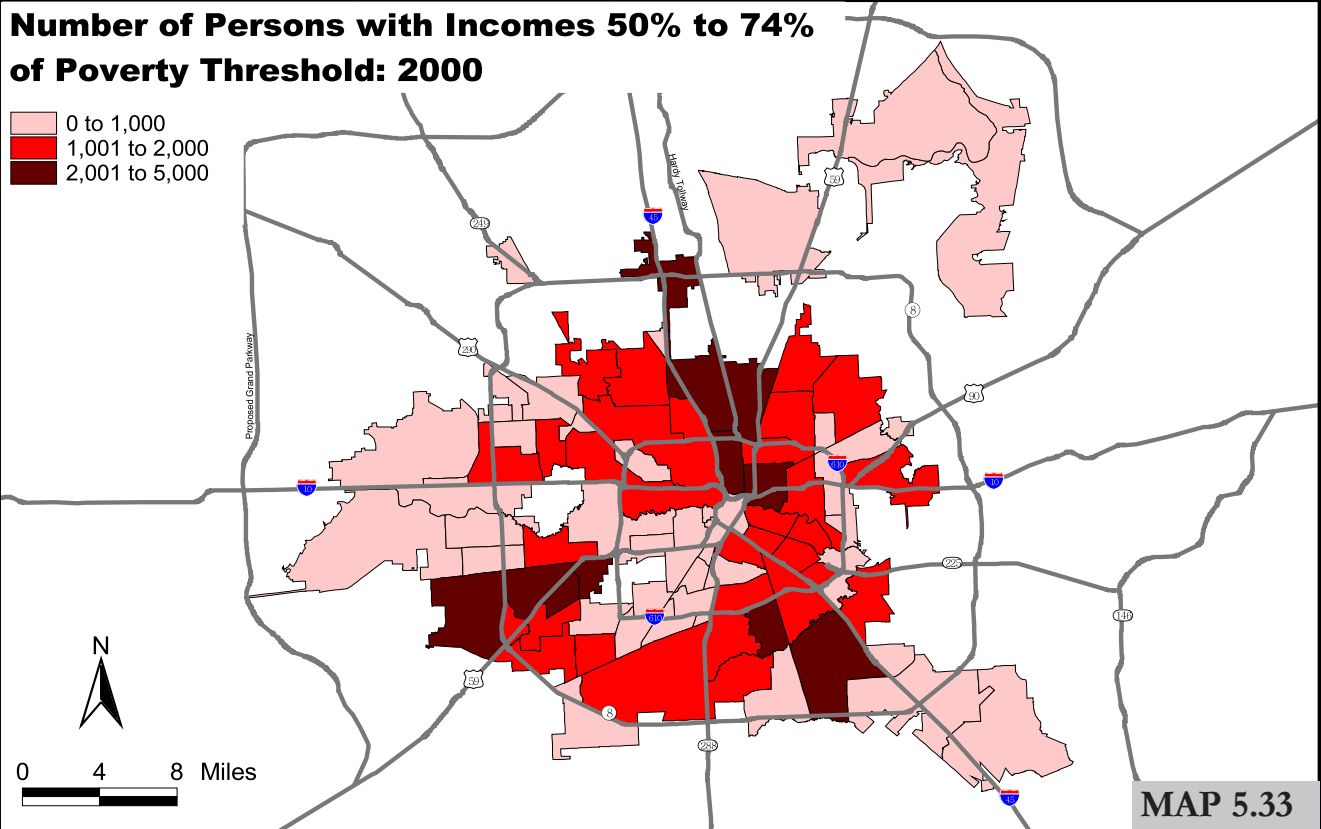
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**Number of Persons with Incomes 50% to 74%
of Poverty Threshold: 2000**

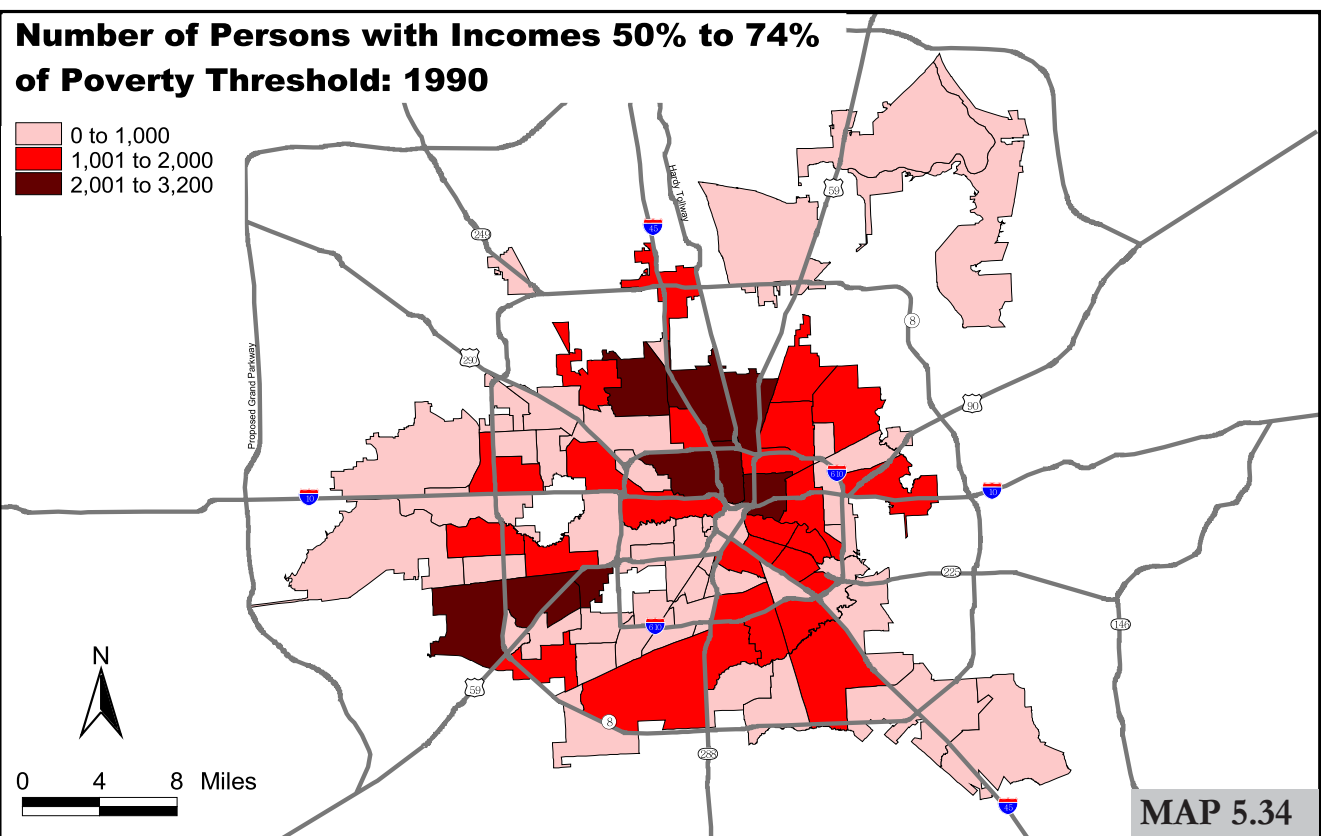
0 to 1,000
1,001 to 2,000
2,001 to 5,000



MAP 5.33

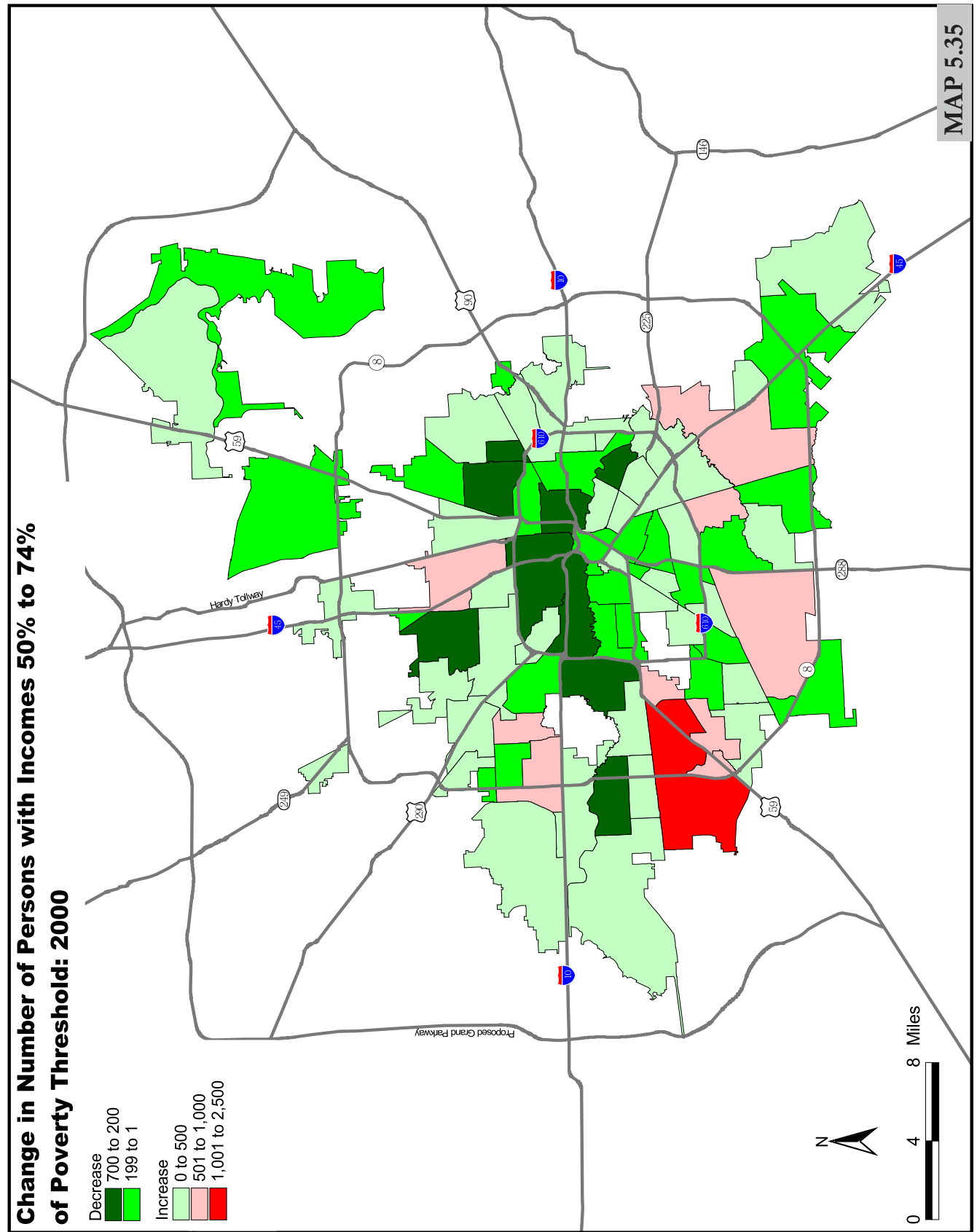
**Number of Persons with Incomes 50% to 74%
of Poverty Threshold: 1990**

0 to 1,000
1,001 to 2,000
2,001 to 3,200

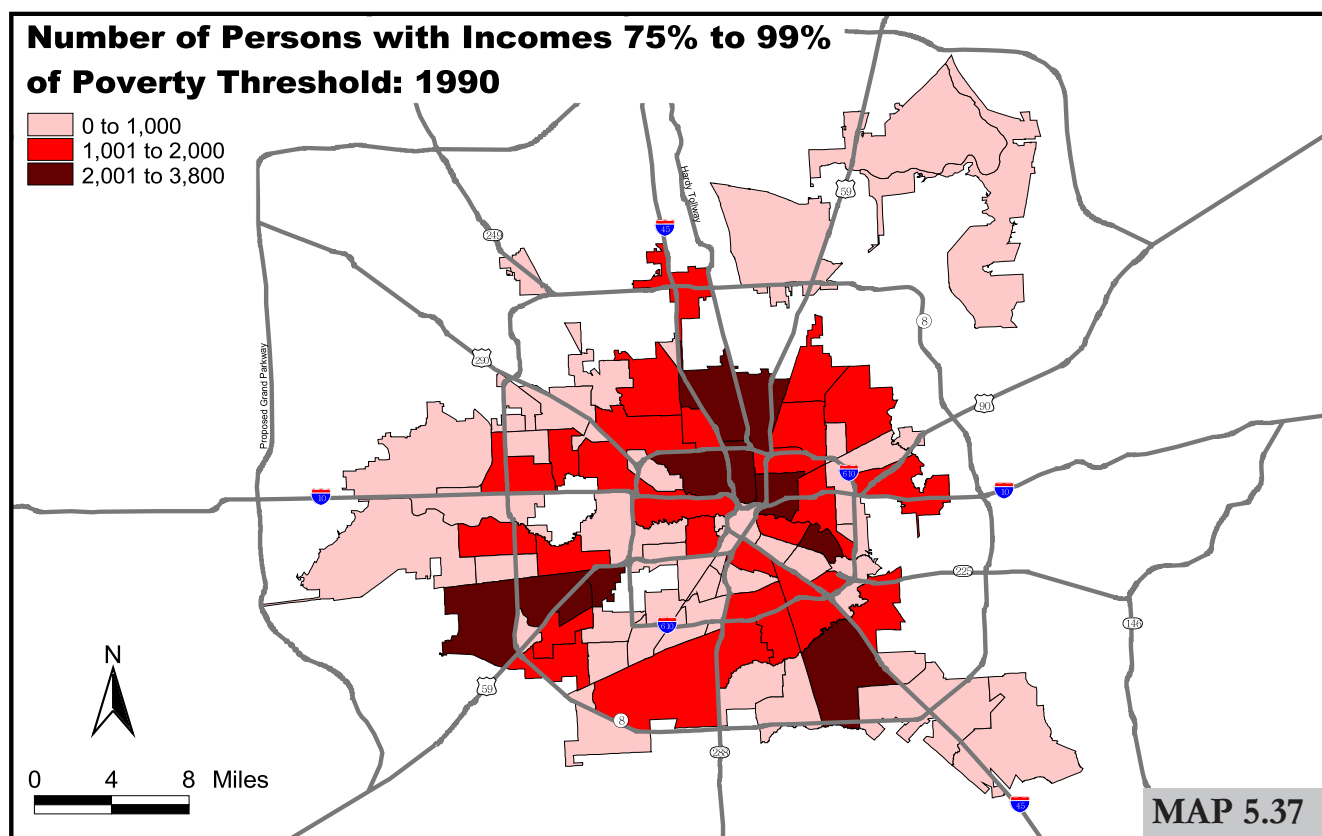
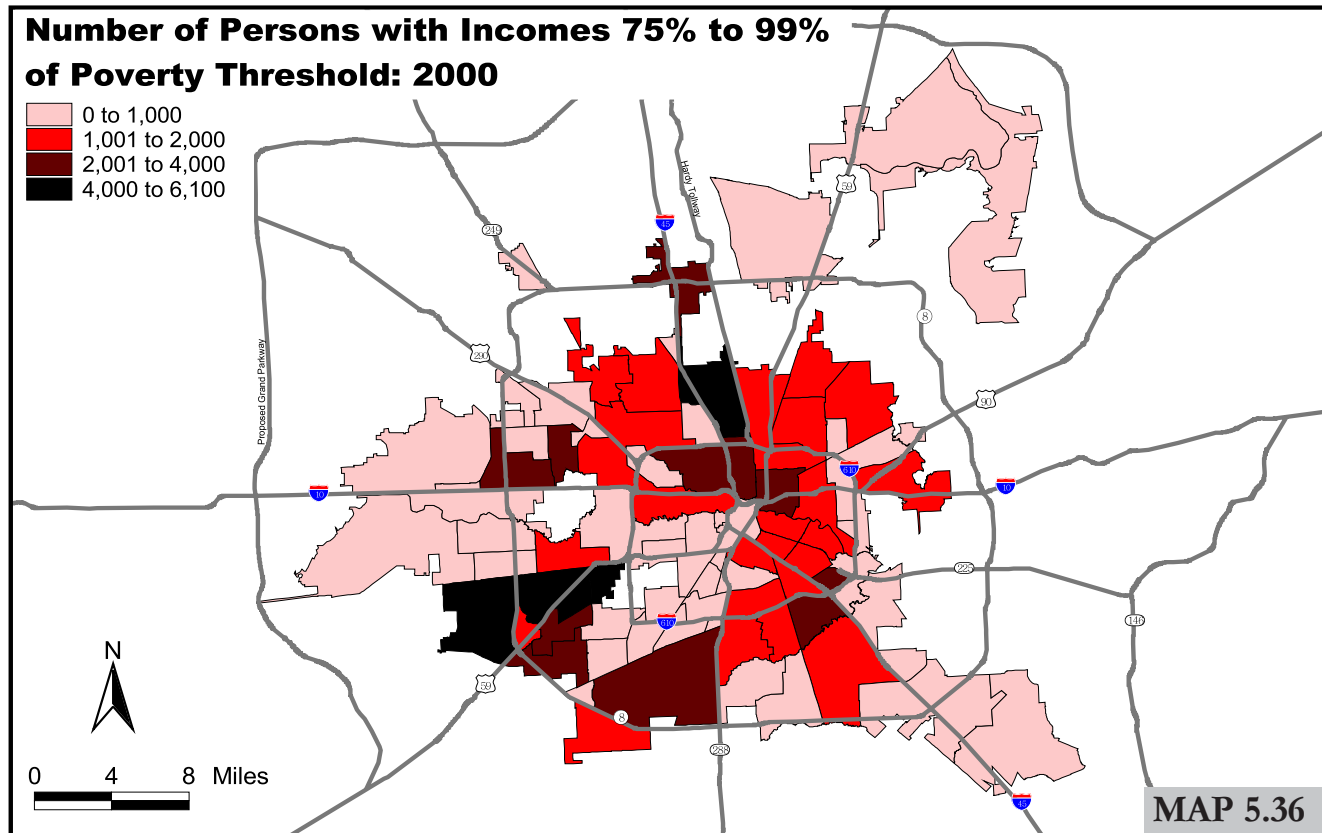


MAP 5.34

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